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FEBRUARY 5, 2001

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Back Issues and Reception

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FEBRUARY 5, 2001

ISSUE 4,490

- 4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Respecting the Supreme Court after *Bush v. Gore*, &c.
- 6 **ANDREW SULLIVAN** TRB: HOT HEIR Michael Powell and the new nepotism.
- 7 **THE EDITORS** THE REAL TEST Mr. President, hold firm on vouchers.
- 8 **NOTEBOOK** God and man at the inaugural, &c.
- 10 **RYAN LIZZA** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: PLAY BALL How I spent the inaugural.
- 12 **JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL** BRAND NEW Everyone's a New Dem now. Even old ones.
- 13 **JOSHUA KURLANTZICK** MANILA DISPATCH: SPLIT DECISION Who toppled Estrada?
- 14 **YOSSEI KLEIN HALEVI** JERUSALEM DISPATCH: JEWISH UNAPPEAL The ugliest election.
- 17 **LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN** CONTAINMENT Dick Cheney's plan to stop Colin Powell.
- 20 **FRANKLIN FOER** AFTER MERITOCRACY When the Clintonites took power, observers said it marked the triumph of a new American elite—fashioned by the top schools in an era of standardized tests. Now the Clintonites are gone, and another elite has taken their place. Loyal, cautious, and obsessed with order—all hail the rise of the organization men.
- 24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: HISTORIES, PAST AND PRESENT *Terrorists in Retirement* revisits old campaigns; *Snatch* is a blast.
- 25 **LIONEL TRILLING** REALITY, UNREALITY, AND THE NOVEL Two newly discovered lectures on Dickens.
- 28 **ROBERT M. SOLOW** GIVING CREDIT *Maestro: Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom* by Bob Woodward; *Greenspan: The Man Behind Money* by Justin Martin
- 32 **CHARLES LARMORE** LIFTING THE VEIL *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* by John Rawls, edited by Barbara Herman
- 34 **EAMON GRENNAN** POEM *Rainbow Skirt*
- 37 **DANIEL AARON** THE GRIPE OF GENIUS *O Lost: A Story of the Buried* by Thomas Wolfe, text established by Arlyn Bruccoli and Matthew J. Bruccoli; *To Loot My Life Clean: The Thomas Wolfe-Maxwell Perkins Correspondence* edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Park Buckner
- 39 **ALAN TAYLOR** MIDNIGHT RAMBLERS *Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in the Revolutionary Era* by Mechal Sobel
- 42 **CHARLES S. MAIER** PANMUNJOM DIARIST: BORDERLINE

On the Cover : Main photo by PHOTO FEST; George W. Bush photo by REUTERS

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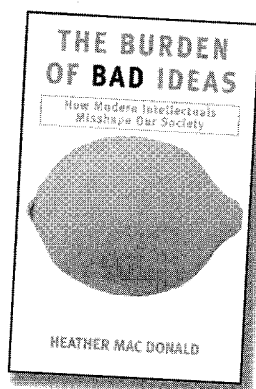
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## High Court

TO THE EDITORS:

Jeffrey Rosen criticizes the U.S. Supreme Court majority as hypocritical, partisan judicial activists for intervening in a political dispute ("Disgrace," December 25). This sounds good in theory. However, it ignores the context of the decision: the Florida Supreme Court's rampant lawlessness. Its decisions were clearly partisan and were designed to prolong a chaotic, standardless recount until its fellow Democrats found enough votes to reverse the certified election results.

To reach the results it did in its two opinions, the Florida Supreme Court disregarded the opinions and decisions of Secretary of State Katherine Harris (constitutionally designated the chief election officer), two respected trial court judges, and, in its last bit of judicial activism, the previous cautionary note from the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court majority, faced with the Florida court's intervention in the political process, had little choice but to put it right. Rosen's failure to acknowledge that context did the U.S. Supreme Court, and therefore the nation, a grave disservice.

VINCENT T. LOMBARDI  
*Via the Internet*

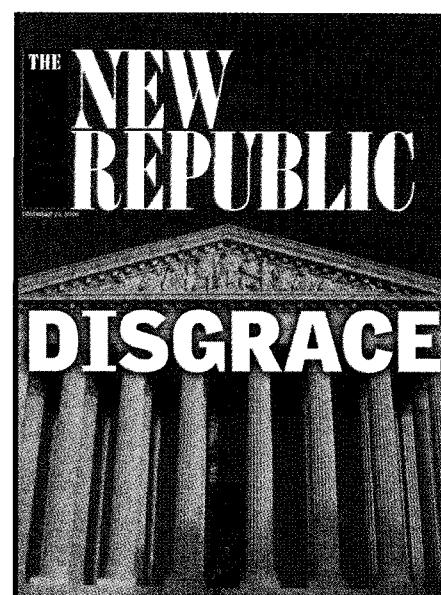
TO THE EDITORS:

Jeffrey Rosen fails to grapple with the very serious issues raised by the manner in which the Florida recount was conducted. The problem is not that different rules were applied in different counties. Had each county applied rules adopted prior to the election, or even if the rules had been created by a plausibly neutral decision-maker, the recount would have been fair, regardless of county-to-county differences in those rules. However, it is deeply troubling when, after the fact, the counties create vote-counting rules systematically to favor the preferred candidate of the vote-counters. I cannot agree that that is of no constitutional concern.

SHELDON KLEIN  
*Via the Internet*

TO THE EDITORS:

One of the themes that Jeffrey Rosen did not have time to develop in his excellent commentary on the Florida recount and the U.S. Supreme Court's final decision is the possibility that the Florida decision would have gone to the U.S. Congress. Although in a previous article he mentioned that possibility as something Florida legislators sought to avoid by passing the Electoral Count Act ("Judge



Not," December 11), looking back on the Court's partisan final decision, it might have been better had the election gone to Congress. In that situation, with Al Gore having won the national popular vote, Congress would have had to decide which set of Florida electors to accept. Although Congress holds a Republican majority, there were reports that Congress was loath to be put in this position, and for good reason: Congress is accountable. Disappointed voters—be they Democrats, independents, or even democratic Republicans—could have exacted their revenge in the next election. But the Supreme Court is beyond the reach of our wrath.

ALFRED R. BARR  
*Washington, D.C.*

TO THE EDITORS:

Jeffrey Rosen's "Disgrace" was excellent and eloquent. His use of Justice Antonin Scalia's own opinion in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* to condemn the five conservative judges' actions in *Bush v. Gore*, and the wonderful portrait of Scalia by Steve Brodner, made me proud of American journalism and criticism.

KIRBY LOCKARD  
*Tucson, Arizona*

TO THE EDITORS:

Whatever the merits of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Bush v. Gore*, surely they cannot justify Steve Brodner's unseemly caricature of Justice Antonin Scalia, which depicted exaggerated Mediterranean features of a sort I had thought went out of style with Joe DiMaggio. *Che vergogna* (shame on you).

MICHAEL LIVINGSTON  
*Cheltenham, Pennsylvania*

## Disagree more

TO THE EDITORS:

In "Not Equal," Jonathan Chait writes, "As a matter of constitutional stability, you have to respect the legitimacy of a Supreme Court ruling you disagree with" (December 25). I couldn't disagree more. Some rulings, such as *Dred Scott*, damage the constitutional stability of the republic. When the Court imperils the Constitution, we must not respect the legitimacy of its ruling. *Bush v. Gore* might not be another *Dred Scott*, but no reasonable person who believes that the former resembles the latter can invoke constitutional stability as justification for respecting the legitimacy of the Court's ruling.

R. SCOTT ROGERS  
Alexandria, Virginia

## Wisconsin idea

TO THE EDITORS:

Andrew Sullivan states that "[w]e live in an imperfect world in which there is not a solution to every problem, a remedy for every wrong" ("More or Less," December 25). Too bad for Sullivan that he does not live in Wisconsin, where the constitu-

tion (Article 1, Section 9) provides that "[e]very person is entitled to a certain remedy in the laws for all injuries, or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property, or character."

J. PAUL KNAP  
Brookfield, Wisconsin

## Culture shock

TO THE EDITORS:

According to David Grann, "It's as if, somewhere along the way, conservatives switched places with the New Left" ("Quiet Riot," December 25). It has been noted before that the far left and far right often agree. Ralph Nader and his supporters on the left knew they were, in effect, working to elect George W. Bush on the right. Who is to blame? The counterculture. The early '70s was a time when the secular tradition of American constitutional government was faced with a new enthusiasm for mysticism and irrationality. The counterculture challenged the idea of evidence based on the senses and on scientific testing. Attacking science always implies attacking democracy, which is the political realization of the scientific method. Zealotry penetrated the

Republican Party as well. Conservatives, one would think, wish to conserve. Today, the right in the United States is identified with issues that involve basic changes in the way Americans do things. The GOP became the party of American radicalism. Had there not been a counterculture, it might never have happened.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ  
College of Staten Island  
City University of New York  
Staten Island, New York

## Even split

TO THE EDITORS:

Owing to the editing of my letter, it is not clear that the exit poll figures I cited are for the whole nation rather than for Florida alone (Correspondence, December 25). The Florida exit polls make even more dubious the claim that Ralph Nader cost Al Gore the election. In Florida, 13 percent of Democrats voted for George W. Bush, whereas 8 percent of Republicans voted for Gore. Republicans and Democrats went equally—1 percent—for Nader.

ERIC ROSENBLUM  
Brooklyn, New York



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## Soul Mates and Soul Searching



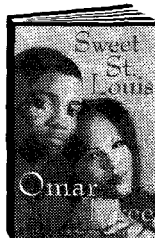
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# TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

## Hot Heir

**Y**OU'D THINK AN administration headed by the son of a former president might be a teensy bit leery of appearing to foster a culture of nepotism. This is a republic, after all. Offices are supposed to be earned, not inherited. And the Bushies' principled opposition to affirmative action should surely be reinforced by a concern that none of the new president's appointees seem to be the beneficiaries of special treatment.

And, to be fair to George W. Bush, most of his appointments have been refreshingly free of cronyism. But now here comes the new chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Michael Powell. A mere 37 years old, Powell is something of a hotshot in the federal bureaucracy. His Army career peaked when he became a troop executive officer, and it was ended by a gruesome car accident in Germany. More recently, he spent time at the antitrust division of the Justice Department before his precocious debut in 1997 at the FCC, which culminated in his oversight of the communications industry's Y2K problems. His cheerful personal website, which makes Laurence Tribe's look self-effacing, shows him hugging various FCC employees and touting his every accomplishment, however minor. Recent photo-ops featured on the site show Powell chummy with Donny and Marie Osmond, Diana Ross, and the cast of "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch." Powell is also black, which adds to his allure in the newly diversified Republican Party.

Oh, yes—and he's the son of Colin Powell, a man no leading politician has dared criticize for the better part of a decade. Which is where the worrying begins. When you look at Michael Powell's remarkably swift rise through the ranks of the federal government, red flags poke up at several points. He won his seat on the FCC thanks to an unusual intervention by Senator John McCain. In February 1997, McCain suggested that one of the commissioners, Rachelle Chong, not be renominated for a second term—an unusual

request, since most commissioners get a second term unless they have made major enemies. Questioned by *The Washington Post*, McCain denied any ulterior motive in speeding Chong's departure. He had "nothing in particular" against Chong, even though she was a Republican: "I just think it's appropriate for someone new to come into the job." That person was the son of McCain's friend Colin Powell, a major power broker in the Republican Party at the time McCain was gearing up for a run for the White House. There's no reason to doubt McCain's sincerity in supporting Powell junior. A McCain staffer told the *Post* that the senator "wants somebody who is going to be a strong opponent to [then-FCC Chairman] Reed Hundt and stand up for free-market principles." But McCain also had a clear political interest in currying favor with an ally who is now secretary of state.

Michael Powell's nomination sailed through the Clinton White House at a time when the Clintonites were equally careful not to provoke a Powell candidacy for president. Powell senior threw a congratulatory party for his son, inviting the other FCC commissioners. And the schmoozing crossed party boundaries. Vice President Al Gore went so far as to personally swear Michael Powell into office—an odd decision by a Democratic vice president for a minor Republican appointee. But Gore, remember, also had an interest in making sure Powell senior didn't run for president in 2000.

Perhaps if Michael Powell had gone out of his way to avoid any hint of impropriety, this could be overlooked. But, in his capacity as a member of the FCC board, Powell took a strong stand on the AOL-Time Warner merger. He was in the minority in wanting to waive all objections to the deal and was instrumental in shepherding it through. This despite the fact that his father became a director of the company the year after Michael became an FCC board member (resigning only two weeks ago) and owns some 240,000 stock options, acquired during the same period. Since Powell junior signed off on the merger, Powell senior's stock options in the company have increased in value by close to \$4 million. If the stock price goes beyond \$65 per share, Powell has the option to purchase 80,000 more. Still, Powell junior refused to recuse himself from the decision, and the ruling was upheld by the usual ethics watchdogs. Legally, it was Michael Powell's decision to make. Ethically, it stinks.

I am not saying Michael Powell is unqualified for his job. By all accounts he is qualified enough: intelligent, hard-working, a good schmoozer, and so on. I even like his free-market bent regarding

regulation. And no one should be punished for being a relative of a Washington *macher*. But today's neo-nepotism is subtler than a simple hereditary claim to high office. The question to be asked is not "Is this man qualified?" The question is "Did this man get a job over other equally or more qualified candidates because of his lineage?" I think in Michael Powell's case, especially given the attention his career has received from the likes of McCain, Gore, and Bush, the answer has to be yes. For that reason alone, his appointment is easily Bush's most suspect yet.

Michael Powell is not alone, of course. This week saw Senator Strom Thurmond nominate his own 28-year-old son to be the top federal prosecutor in South Carolina. Here are some other examples: Hillary Clinton, who would never have become a senator if she hadn't been married to a president; George W. Bush, an able man who would have had about as much chance of becoming president as Pee-wee Herman if he had a different last name; Senator Jean Carnahan, whose only qualification for office is her dead husband; any Kennedy in public life, bar Kathleen Kennedy Townsend; Elaine Chao, labor secretary-designate and wife of Mitch McConnell; Andrew Cuomo, son of Mario and married to a Kennedy; Evan Bayh; Jesse Jackson Jr.; Steve Forbes; Al Gore, whose first congressional seat was his father's. I could go on.

The irony is that the public, far from being outraged by this insider trading, actually embraces it. In our media age, the dynastic story line adds glamour to a candidacy. In an era of expensive campaigns, name recognition means vital seed money for a political career. And, in our emotive celebrity age, the fusion of Hollywood stardom and political careers favors a Cuomo-Kennedy alliance or a widow inheriting her husband's Senate seat. It's good, tear-jerking, tabloid-filling copy.

But good copy is not healthy politics, and all this nepotism is a worrisome sign that America's political class is becoming increasingly insular. So when we read in the tabloids that Britain's Prince William has been exchanging steamy e-mail messages with Lauren Bush, W's sexy niece, we can only gape at how far we have come. "The Bush family are favorites of the Windsors so William was completely relaxed about it. He and Lauren felt they could be very open with each other," one of Lauren's friends told a British tabloid recently. How appropriate. Now that we have a democracy predicated on lineage, why not return to an even purer hereditary principle? A royal wedding, anyone?

ANDREW SULLIVAN



# The Real Test

**A**LL HAIL THE new education consensus. That was the sentiment in Washington this week when President Bush unveiled his first major policy proposal, a \$47.6 billion plan to reform America's schools. With its focus on helping poor, minority children in inner-city schools via a combination of increased spending, new

testing, and tougher accountability, the plan was lauded by congressional Republicans and Democrats alike—even by Ted Kennedy, the senator from the American Federation of Teachers. As *The New York Times* declared, there is now “broad agreement on major education issues from all corners of the political landscape.”

But the new president's education plan did contain one discordant note: It proposed that if a public school doesn't meet testing standards for three straight years, the federal government will give parents up to \$1,500—drawn from the Title I money that would otherwise go to the school—to help send their children to private school. In other words, Bush's plan called for vouchers—and vouchers, the establishment media hastened to add, are the political kiss of death. As the *Times* put it, perhaps betraying its own bias, “The question is whether [Bush] will be willing to blow up a bipartisan bill over the issue of vouchers.”

Well, the *Times* and the Democrats and the teachers' unions can all rest easy, because it looks as though Bush won't be blowing up anything. Although he campaigned in support of vouchers, the new president has been backing away from them ever since the election was decided in December. First, he picked as his education secretary Rod Paige, who, as Houston schools superintendent, showed only lukewarm support for school choice. Next, in early January, anonymous advisers told *The Washington Post* that vouchers were negotiable. Then, on the Sunday before Bush unveiled his plan, White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card went on CNN's “Late Edition” to declare—twice in the span of one minute—that vouchers were not the Bush administration's “top priority.” And when Bush presented his plan in a White House speech on Tuesday, he did not even mention

vouchers by name. Later that day, when reporters pressed Bush on the issue, he proclaimed: “None of us at the federal government should try to impose a school voucher plan on states and local jurisdictions. That's not the prerogative of the federal government.” Bush's ostensible support for school choice apparently is little more than a symbolic gesture for his conservative supporters and a bargaining chip. Once negotiations on the Hill begin, vouchers will be jettisoned, the first victim of the new education consensus.

They shouldn't be. Despite the talk of a new consensus, the voucher debate is far from settled. Indeed, whether vouchers are good or bad for public schools remains

very much an open question. As we have stated before, we do not view vouchers as a matter of ideological faith, as many of the conservatives who champion them do. But we will support them passionately if they produce results. And, to find out whether they do, they must be tried—not everywhere, all at once, but in a few places where poor public schools right now make it virtually impossible for students to learn.

The meager evidence available on vouchers so far is encouraging. In the few areas where they have been implemented—such as Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Florida's Escambia County—they have served as a prod to underperforming public schools. Once they began losing students (and funding) to neighboring private schools through voucher programs, the chastened schools took steps to improve. And, as a recent study by Harvard's Paul Peterson showed, students who used vouchers to leave public schools for private ones performed better than those who stayed. The evidence is not conclusive, but that's exactly why Bush should push for further experimentation.

And there's another reason: Vouchers are one of Bush's few concrete policies that might actually help the poor, especially the African American poor. While Bush is forever talking about how much he cares for African Americans in his heart, he's so far done a pitiful job of converting that concern into policy, which is why only 9 percent of black voters cast their ballots for him in November. Now Bush is on the verge of abandoning a policy that, according to a 1999 poll conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 72 percent of African Americans in low-income households support. Before Bush embraces our great new education consensus, perhaps he should think for a moment about them. ■

**CHRIST, YOU KNOW IT AIN'T EASY:** Who in his right (or left) mind would not pray for the presidency of George W. Bush? He, and therefore we, will need all the help he can get; and God, if there is a God, might be of considerable assistance. Anyway, it has been a long time since the American public square has been naked—and so it was not a surprise to hear a reverend and a pastor offer prayers at the president's inauguration. No thoughtful American would dispute Pastor Kirbyjon H. Caldwell's exhortation that we not choose "pride over purpose," and "popularity over principles," and "materialism over morals"; and that the opposite choice leaves us sorely in need of forgiveness. And no American of good will would contest Reverend Franklin Graham's aspiration that we "rise above partisan politics" and achieve "reconciliation between the races." To be sure, there are Americans of good will who deny that God has anything to do with the attainment of those fine objectives, that God has any place at all in the political rituals of this open society. The sermons at the Capitol certainly excluded the godless in America. "Now, O Lord, we dedicate this presidential inaugural ceremony to you," Graham intoned. Who, precisely, is "we"? Surely we—that is, the citizenry of the United States—dedicate this presidential inaugural ceremony, and every other one, to liberty, to equality, to democracy, to justice: not to beings but to principles. (And when, incidentally, did the ministry to the White House become a dynastic position?) But the churchly rhetoric of exclusion did not end there. Graham concluded his invocation this way:

"We pray this in the name of the Father and of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, amen." And Caldwell ended his benediction this way: "We respectfully submit this humble prayer in the name that's above all other names, Jesus, the Christ. Let all who agree say amen." With these words, with these crushing Christological thuds, Caldwell barred millions of Americans from their own amens. After all, there are millions of Americans for whom the name that is above all other names is decidedly not the name of Jesus, the Christ; and they are good people, spiritual people, patriotic people. Why was a mullah or a rabbi not summoned to

this supremely American pulpit? And why was a poet not asked, who could solemnize the day nontheistically? Suddenly the spirit of inclusion in which the conservatives propound their religiosity disappeared. Suddenly the lofty insistence that the ultimate questions matter was exposed as religious and political sectarianism, as another attempt to Christianize the spirit in America. If the Mall is hallowed ground, it is not because Jesus walked there. If the Mall is hallowed ground, it is because Lincoln walked there. And there, at his own inauguration, he taught that talk of God cannot be haughty talk, because no believer is vouchsafed a perfect clarity, and "the Almighty has his own purposes." So, it appears, do politicians.

**DON'T ADVISE, DON'T CONSENT:** "It is my conviction that taxpayer funds should not be used to pay for abortions or advocate or actively promote abortion either here or abroad," said President George W. Bush in announcing his first executive decision, which restricted the funding the United States contributes to family-planning groups overseas. But it's *already* illegal to use U.S. funds to pay for, or even to advocate, abortions abroad. It has been illegal for years. Bush gave everyone the impression (and few, if any, news reports corrected him) that he was cutting off money being spent on abortions overseas, but in fact there wasn't any such money to cut off. What the new president actually did was limit U.S. funding of birth-control services—which help



prevent abortions by allowing the poor in the developing world to plan their families—provided by any organization that also provides or advocates abortion with its *own* funds. As a result, total world abortions will likely increase, as studies consistently show that abortion rates are lower in developing-world countries with good access to family-planning services. And Bush's move is not only counterproductive, it is hypocritical. While W. took his dramatic first-day-in-office action against funds intended for the *foreign* poor, he has not proposed anything comparable with regard to abortion or family-planning groups in the United States, many of which receive federal aid. Of course, if denied family-planning services here, affluent American women could retaliate against Bush politically. The distant poor can't. Compassionate conservatism is off to an auspicious start.

**FUZZY ENGLISH:** As Bush unveiled his education program last week, it became clear that his administration is in favor of vouchers as a concept (at least halfheartedly) but foursquare against them as a term. Indeed, the centerpiece of his education agenda seems to be a determined effort to eradicate the word from the American vocabulary. "The word 'voucher' is misused," declared Bush senior adviser Karl Rove. "Rather than talking about vouchers, we're talking about a commitment to a child," echoed Chief of Staff Andy Card. Education Secretary Rod Paige took the pro-voucher/anti-"voucher" line even further. Asked about vouchers last

Sunday, he replied, "We never use that word too much." So little, apparently, that by Wednesday Paige had wiped it from his memory altogether, telling one interviewer, "Well, I don't really know what you mean by that term." It is, of course, common for elected officials to eschew vocabulary that frightens focus groups. Clinton administration officials hardly "spent" a dollar in their federal budgets, though they "invested" billions. But, unlike the Clintonites, the Bush administration actually seems to be making some linguistic headway. *The Washington Post* now tiptoes around the phrase: A recent story delicately described Bush's plan by noting that "opponents call such payments vouchers." Yes, and until last week so did you.

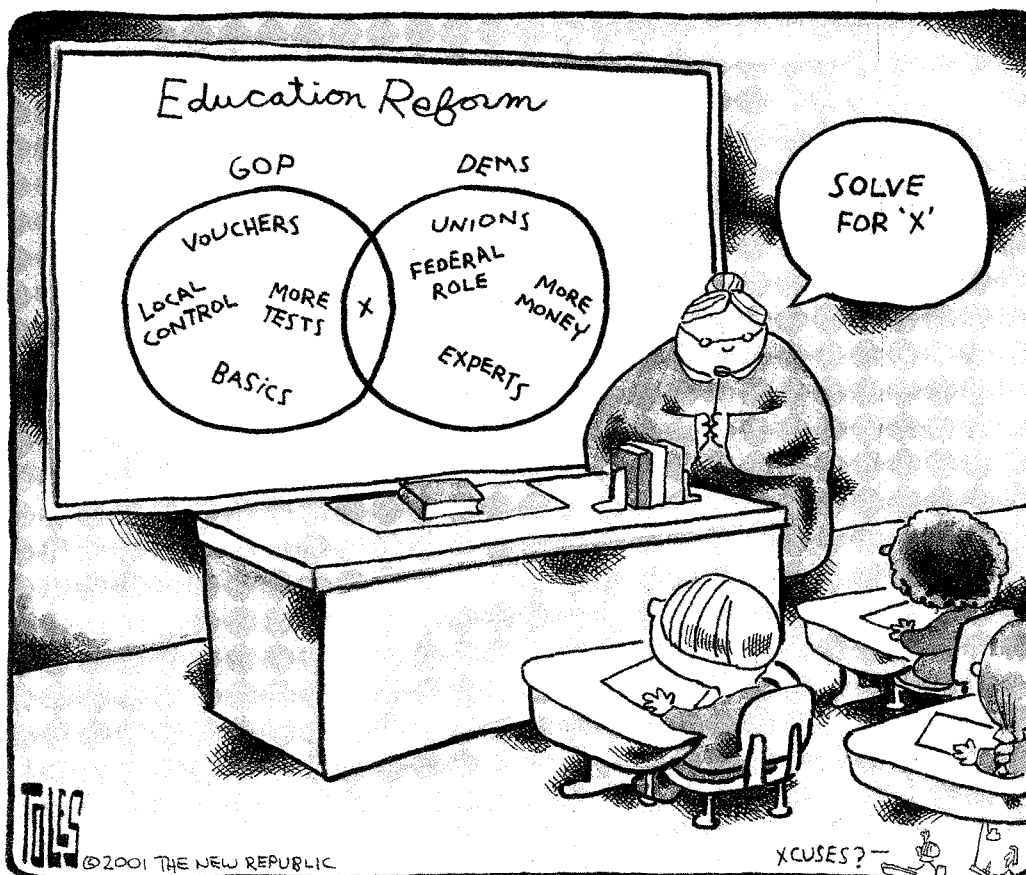
**PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE:** "It was his style in Texas and will be in Washington: Bush Nice. He is conflict-averse."—Fred Barnes, *The Weekly Standard*, January 22

"Bush is more bellicose, more ready to fight than he lets on."—Fred Barnes, *The Weekly Standard*, January 29

**THAT KEEPS ON GIVING:** At the kickoff to the inaugural last Thursday, the music chosen for George W.'s descent from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial was Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. The piece is classic Americana, celebrating the nation's heritage. But is that the only reason the Bush team selected it? After all, the symphony borrows its major theme from a classic Shaker hymn. Its first line: "Tis the gift to be simple."

**US NEITHER:** "The spectacle of a new U.S. president assuming power and addressing the public out in the open took on a special meaning for Japanese students Takuro Sugihara, 21, and Takayuki Uno, 24. In Japan, they said, citizens don't even get a direct voice in the election of their head of government."—*The Washington Post*, January 21

**NO KIDDING:** "I don't want to exaggerate the role that politicians play in our lives as moral leaders."—Jesse Jackson, Fox News, November 29, 1998 ■



# White House Watch Play Ball

By RYAN LIZZA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2:30 P.M.,

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SMITH CENTER

**N**ORMALLY, EACH INAUGURAL includes an event paying tribute to the new vice president. This year, Dick Cheney has decided to switch things around and celebrate America's veterans. The Bush foreign policy team, Bob Dole, John McCain, and 101 Congressional Medal of Honor recipients are all showcased at the event. But the high point is when singer Lee Greenwood performs "Proud to Be an American." Members of the audience, some with tears in their eyes, raise their arms and sway back and forth while singing the chorus. Among those in attendance is Tom Gniewek of Tennessee. Tom has worked tirelessly since 1992 to alert the media to Al Gore's zinc mine. After years of being blown off by the press, he finally hit pay dirt when he sent the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page a video of Gore's Tennessee property. Tom says the editors came down to Tennessee, rented a helicopter for \$600 per hour, and, with Tom riding along and directing, took photographs of Gore's mine. A lengthy editorial-page piece followed shortly thereafter, and a niggling campaign issue was born. After finishing his story Tom says, apropos of nothing, "I never owned a gun, but I do now."

4:00 P.M., MCI CENTER

Across town from Cheney's celebration of America's veterans, the Bushes are celebrating America's youth. Instead of touching remembrances of Dole's and McCain's wartime service, we're treated to thousands of young girls and boys wearing glow sticks and shrieking to the sounds of a female trio dressed in skintight pants and revealingly torn half-shirts. The arena is drowned in fog and deep purple lighting. An eleven-year-old waving pom-poms and wearing red and blue glow sticks tells me the band is called Destiny's Child. When the band exits the stage, it is replaced by a man in a sport coat. A voice booms, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Secretary of Housing and Urban Development-designee Mel Martinez!" The kids scream wildly for the former executive of Orange County, Florida. In fact, there seems to be nothing that they don't scream for. As Martinez tells the story of his journey to America, certain words elicit earsplitting shrieks, specifically "Cuba," "the Catholic Church," and "Florida." I sneak backstage to what is usually the Washington Wizards'

locker room to try to interview Destiny's Child about politics and youth. For several minutes I wait outside the door, along with five elementary-school-age children hoping for autographs. But my tie, overcoat, height, and lack of glow sticks soon give me away. A polite Bush advance person named Leslie, who is apparently assigned to protect Destiny's Child from reporters, escorts me back to the arena floor. There, a band named 9 Days is busy ignoring George W. Bush's campaign rhetoric about restoring civility to Washington. Finishing their set, the band members smash their guitars and trample their electronic keyboards.

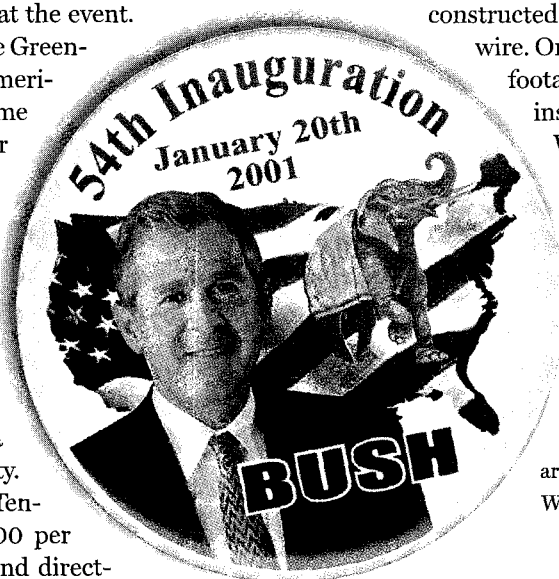
9:00 P.M., MARRIOTT WARDMAN PARK HOTEL

I'm in the Lone Star Sports Bar, just outside the main ballroom at the Texas State Society's Black Tie 'n' Boots Inaugural Ball. In what is presumably considered an homage to Texas, the room is decorated with candelabras constructed from Budweiser bottles and barbed wire. On several giant-screen televisions, live footage of Bush and prominent Texans inside the ballroom is being shown. When the national anthem begins to play, the bartender stops serving and stands at attention. It is at this moment that I hear an exchange that pretty much captures the tenor of the whole event:

WOMAN WAITING IN LINE FOR A BEER: I want a beer!

HER DATE: You can't have a beer, they are playing the national anthem.

WOMAN: Beer is very American.



SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 8:30 P.M.,  
WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER

There are eight official inaugural balls on Saturday night, and it is universally assumed that the Ohio ball is the worst. Ball-hoppers would kill to attend the Texas/Wyoming or Florida balls, but Ohio didn't exactly play a memorable role in the presidential election. In fact, it turns out that the Ohio ball has little to do with Ohio—it's mostly a party for donors to the Presidential Inaugural Committee.

The organizers seem to have spent most of their resources keeping the press away from the donors. As the crowd enters the convention floor from a hallway, reporters are weeded out from the partygoers and escorted one by one down a corridor labeled PRESS CHUTE. The chute is separated from the ball by blue curtains. My escort, a volunteer who is quick to tell me that she didn't vote for Bush, brings me to what she calls the media "pen" and passes me off to Mary, who serves as my minder—or "baby-sitter," as she jokes—for the evening. If I want to experience the grandeur of the ballroom floor, Mary will take me. If I want to interview an "Ohioan," Mary will set it up. If I want to go to the bathroom, Mary will escort me and wait outside the door. The media pen has a set of bleachers that overlook the ballroom floor. People in black tie assemble just below, staring and pointing at us, apparently trying to figure out who we are. I imagine that, sitting in the bleach-

# Dumbing Down the Public: Why It Matters

Diane Ravitch is a research professor, New York University; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, over's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education.

**O**n several occasions, I have found myself in a familiar dialogue. When I complain about low expectations in the schools, my opposite number says, "So what? Our economy is doing well, we win the lion's share of Nobel Prizes, and we have enough qualified people to fill our most demanding professions." In other words, even if a third of our youngsters are not learning the most elementary skills in school, even if a third of our college freshmen must get remediation on campus, there's no cause for concern.

Behind this disagreement are two different assumptions: I assume that our education system should aim to educate everyone who comes to school; the other side says that ability is distributed along a bell-shaped curve and that we should not be overly concerned about the laggards because we will always need people to pick up the trash and sweep the streets. I confess that I get confused at this point because the current argument favoring low or no standards is coming from people who claim to be on the left.

Some evidence recently surfaced, which suggests that **a democratic society pays a price for widespread ignorance.** The *Princeton Review*, best known for its test preparation services, analyzed the vocabulary used by the presidential candidates in the campaign debates of 2000 and compared it to the vocabulary levels used in earlier campaign debates.

The *Princeton Review* obtained transcripts of the Gore-Bush debates, the Clinton-Bush-Perot debate of

1992, the Kennedy-Nixon debate of 1960, and the Lincoln-Douglas debate of 1858. It analyzed these transcripts using a standard vocabulary test that indicates the minimum educational level needed for a reader to understand a document. This test is ordinarily used to evaluate textbooks and other educational materials.

The results? In the debates of 2000, George W. Bush spoke at a sixth-grade level (6.7); Al Gore spoke at a high seventh-grade level (7.9). In 1992, challenger Bill Clinton scored in the seventh grade (7.6), President George Bush in the sixth grade (6.8), and Ross Perot at a sixth-grade level (6.3).

Our contemporary politicians, who found it necessary to speak to us as sixth and seventh graders, compared unfavorably with Kennedy and Nixon, both of whom spoke in a vocabulary appropriate for tenth graders. And they, in turn, looked sophomoric when compared to Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, whose scores, respectively, were 11.2 and 12.0.

**Is it the candidates who have dumbed down their appeals or are they simply acknowledging that the public has a limited vocabulary?**

Candidates for public office, it is clear, must tailor their arguments to what the public can understand. Even though most Americans have completed at least twelve years of education, our candidates for president know that they cannot use big or unusual words when they address the voting public. This is what happens in a society that tolerates low expectations in our schools.

— Diane Ravitch

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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ers surveying the crowd with our notebooks and our dangling credentials, we look like judges at a dance competition.

I resolve that my mission for the night will be to ditch Mary and hobnob on the ballroom floor unattended. But first I wait for Bush to arrive and do the brief, painful dance he must perform at each of the balls. The new president makes his appearance onstage at a little after 10 p.m. "We are here to celebrate democracy," he says haltingly. "This is a country that understands the voice of the people." He follows with one of his trademark two-sentences-in-one constructions: "It's a country I am so proud to be the president of the United States." After a one-minute waltz with the new first lady, Bush exits the stage. Within minutes, the entire floor empties—even though the ball is scheduled to go on till 1 a.m. I never even get a chance to try to ditch Mary. ■

## Can anyone be a New Democrat?

# Brand New

By JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL

**"I**N LESS THAN a year," says Democratic Leadership Council President Al From, "the Senate New Democrat Coalition has quickly become the strongest and most unified Democratic group within the Senate." And he's not the only one saying so. *Roll Call* recently noted the DLC's "soaring stock." *The Hill* said politicians were "flocking to the Senate New Democrat Coalition." Not only have the New Democrats swelled in number, but most of the growth comes from newly elected members. In the current Congress, marquee New Dems like Evan Bayh, Joe Lieberman, and John Breaux will apparently play key roles in brokering deals with the Republican White House. And the outlook for a host of New Democrat policy initiatives—on education, entitlement reform, and prescription drugs—looks brighter than ever.

With a picture so rosy, it's easy to see why Al From is crowing. Until, of course, you realize that most of these New Democrats aren't really New Democrats at all, at least not ideologically. What at first glance looks like a shift to the political center may in fact be nothing more than a clever branding scheme.

Last year, the Democrats' centrist bloc lost Senate veterans Bob Kerrey, Pat Moynihan, and Chuck Robb. But not to worry, the DLCers explain, the Senate New Democrat Coalition has picked up an even larger crew of newcomers: Michigan's Debbie Stabenow, Florida's Bill Nelson, Missouri's Jean Carnahan, Washington's Maria Cantwell, and, of course, New York's Hillary Clinton.

Hillary Clinton? That's the problem. The Senate New Democrats may have lots of new members, but they're not

New Democrats in any meaningful sense. Take two of the DLC's cherished reforms—partial Social Security privatization and Medicare changes that allow a greater role for HMOs. Most of the incoming Senate "New Dems" oppose them. Last year, the Campaign for America's Future (CAF), a left-liberal interest group, pressed Democratic candidates to sign a pledge promising to oppose efforts to privatize Social Security or "voucherize" Medicare. It didn't take much pressing. Ostensible New Dems Clinton, Stabenow, Nelson, Carnahan, and Cantwell all signed.

Stabenow is a perfect example of how loosely the New Dem label is being applied. To be sure, Stabenow caucused with New Democrats during her two terms in the House; she's supported NAFTA and welfare reform; and the AFL-CIO endorsed her primary opponent for governor in 1994. But Stabenow's voting record contradicts almost every other signature New Democrat position. She has pledged to oppose New Dem-style entitlement reform; she voted against extending fast-track trade negotiating authority in 1997; and she voted against permanent normal trading relations for China in 2000. She has even hedged on increasing the number of H-1B visas, which would allow more foreign nationals to work in the tech industry, a virtual DLC obsession.

New Dem activists say growth inevitably leads to some ideological dilution. Will Marshall, head of the DLC-affiliated Progressive Policy Institute, describes the New Democrat affiliation as less a matter of policy positions than political temperament. "It's a place where it's OK to take a fresh approach ... where you don't have to mindlessly intone the party's position," he says. "These members are signaling their policy independence."

But the new New Dems didn't signal much independence in the last election. A couple of days before he died, Missouri Governor and Senate candidate Mel Carnahan said, "I will never vote to privatize Social Security, turn Medicare into a voucher system or raise the eligibility age, as my opponent [John Ashcroft] has done." In a July debate, Bill Nelson asked, "Should Social Security be recklessly endangered by privatizing part of it?" If, as CAF's pledge-drive organizer Roger Hickey says, "even a Debbie Stabenow and a Hillary Clinton find it useful to call themselves New Democrats," does the term really mean anything?

Politicians like Stabenow are following the path the Clinton administration blazed. Over eight years, the administration slew numerous liberal sacred cows—making it safe for Democrats to support welfare reform, the death penalty, and deficit reduction—while maintaining strong support from the party's traditional constituencies. As a result, it's now easy to be a New Democrat. So easy, in fact, that you can be an Old Democrat at the same time. Where the party's liberal base has pretty much declared surrender—welfare, crime, fiscal discipline—the incoming senators are New Dems. But where being a New Dem is still controversial within the party—entitlement reform, racial preferences, school vouchers, trade—they jump ship.

You might think the folks at the DLC would be upset that Clinton diluted their New Democrat brand. But, as long as it hoodwinks Beltway types into thinking DLC politics is dominant, DLCers don't seem to mind. "They've become really fix-

JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL is Washington editor of *The American Prospect*.

ated on the idea that every candidate has to run under the name," says one well-placed Democratic source. "Al From is obsessed with every candidate using the brand name."

So who gets to carry the New Democrat label? Most of the Senate's new New Dems ran on issues pretty similar to Al Gore's, whose defeat most DLCers chalk up to his hopelessly Old Dem agenda. So what makes Stabenow a New Dem and Gore an Old Dem? Easy: Gore lost. ■

## Manila Dispatch Split Decision

By JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

**F**OR THE LAST four months, a small East Manila shrine to the Virgin Mary served as the launching point for protests against former Philippine President Joseph Estrada. Starting last October, when Estrada was accused of accepting money from an illegal gambling syndicate, thousands of Filipinos began gathering at the shrine to hurl insults at their leader and initiate marches down Epifanio De Los Santos Avenue.

The protest leaders, who coordinated their efforts through text messages sent via mobile phones, were mostly middle- and upper-class. Fifteen years earlier, protesters had assembled at the same shrine to demand the resignation of President Ferdinand Marcos—like Estrada, a populist autocrat toppled by the educated elite. This time, when Estrada was brought up on articles of impeachment, thousands massed. On January 16, when senators acting as judges in his trial refused to admit damning evidence, thousands held a prayer vigil at the shrine. Three days later, the military withdrew its support for the president, and he handed over power to Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. At the shrine, Filipinos said blessings of thanks.

But have anyone's prayers really been answered? Estrada was awful, but he was not an aberration. He was the natural result of a political system that produces two kinds of leaders: populist demagogues and out-of-touch elitists, who share little except for a tendency toward corruption. Filipinos are rightly proud that for the second time in two decades they have chased a would-be tyrant from power. But the real question is why they keep having to.

Estrada came to power because of his support among the Filipino poor, who know little about mobile phones or almost anything else going on in the capital. Poor voters can be bought off (at one point during the Estrada crisis, the president and his opponents organized competing buffets, serving heaps of roast pig in the hope of winning over the public). But, when they're not bribed, the Filipino *masas* (masses) generally fall for unabashed populists who campaign in their

name. In his first years in office, Marcos enjoyed considerable support among the poor. In 1998, the same people handed a landslide victory to Estrada (nicknamed Erap). Estrada, it was widely alleged, had sired numerous illegitimate children and siphoned off money from the government. But the poor still flocked to the former B-movie actor, who campaigned under the slogan "Erap for the poor."

When Arroyo assumed power last week, she returned control to the elite Estrada had railed against. Philippine politics has long been dominated by a few powerful families, descendants of the Spaniards who established a hacienda system that made the country's distribution of wealth among the most inequitable in Southeast Asia. Often congregating in the Makati Business Club, an association of blue-blooded dynasties named for Manila's swankiest district, the elites have used their political connections to win generous government contracts. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, land reform, traditions of social welfare, and leftist political influence have broadened the economic elite. But in the Philippines wealth remains tightly concentrated, and practically every administration is filled with the same corrupt faces, often from the same families. In the days leading up to her assumption of the presidency, Arroyo made sure to highlight her credentials: She was "her father's daughter." (Her late father, Diosdado Macapagal, was president from 1961 to 1965.)

The Philippine Senate is also packed with scions of the aristocracy. Because senators are chosen by the country as a whole rather than by individual states, running a campaign requires a huge amount of money. Weak banking laws make it easy to funnel payments to politicians or set up illegal bank accounts to buy votes. The Paris-based Financial Advisory Task Force has placed the Philippines on its list of 15 countries where money-laundering is rampant.

Given the tension between the *masas* and the aristocracy, almost any Philippine president is doomed to fail. Populists often have no idea how to run the country, except into the ground. Estrada, for instance, interfered in a major Securities and Exchange Commission fraud investigation into a friend's affairs, scaring off foreign investors and helping trigger a collapse in the country's stock market. Populists also face constant plots by old-line dynasties; indeed, the Manila business community began the unrest that brought down Estrada.

On the other hand, presidents with elite connections, such as Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, enjoy support from the business community but face the anger of the *masas*, who quickly become restless under rulers to whom they have no ties. In neighboring Thailand, leaders like former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai forged connections with the business community while also being accepted by much of the general public; in the Philippines, no modern politician has enjoyed such broad support.

The Philippines' combination of a tiny elite and an assertive populace could threaten political stability for years to come. Shortly after Arroyo was sworn in to office, Senator Rodolfo Biazon said the country had "solved one problem" by removing Estrada, but he admitted democracy might not have been strengthened. One day in the not-too-distant future, Filipinos may well find themselves massing on Epifanio De Los Santos Avenue yet again. ■

JOSHUA KURLANTZICK has covered Southeast Asia for *The Economist* and Agence France-Presse.

# Jerusalem Dispatch

## Jewish Unappeal

By YOSHI KLEIN HALEVI

SEVERAL DOZEN RUSSIAN-IMMIGRANT journalists and intellectuals are gathered in the prime minister's residence, feasting on smoked salmon and vodka as Ehud Barak, dressed in a black pullover and windbreaker, mingles among them. He has brought them here in an attempt to reverse his plummeting support among Russian immigrants, who helped elect him in 1999 but now prefer Ariel Sharon by a margin of two to one. In Israel's polarized electorate—where Arabs and secular Ashkenazim generally vote left and the ultra-Orthodox and traditionalist Sephardim generally vote right—the million-strong Russian immigrants form the only large swing bloc. They've helped determine every election since 1992. And the Barak campaign is desperate to win them back.

The near-hopelessness of that effort is evident in the room. "Ehud is running against Barak," says one journalist, mocking the prime minister's repeated policy reversals. Adds another, "The Palestinians and the Israelis will finally be getting the leader they deserve—Ariel Sharon."

Andre Sigalov, who heads a group that promotes liberal values among Russian immigrants, is among the few people here whose vote Barak should be able to count on. But even Sigalov is skeptical. He approaches Barak and demands, "How can you bring Arafat into this city when we know that it will become unlivable?"

"I haven't actually given up anything yet," Barak replies. "I want to strip away Arafat's masks and get to his bottom line. Who is he really? What does he want? And then we'll know whether we have a partner or not."

But Sigalov is dissatisfied. "Barak is a very smart man," he tells me later. "The problem is, he's already succeeded. He's stripped the mask from Arafat, and now we know exactly who he is and what he wants. But Barak is offering him Jerusalem anyway." He adds, "As a liberal, I can't vote for Sharon. That means I'll have to put in a blank ballot."

It's a common sentiment. Israel faces an election between unelectables. Even within his own party, neither candidate is considered the best choice; had this campaign been determined by popular appeal, Shimon Peres would be running against Benjamin Netanyahu. For many, Barak and Sharon offer only a negation of each other. Barak symbolizes excessive concessions; Sharon, excessive force. Together, they have convinced Israelis that neither path will bring real safety. Perhaps that's why so many voters appear apathetic even though the stakes, as the two candidates constantly remind us, have never been higher.

The Russians are only the beginning of Barak's troubles. As the February 6 election approaches, even many of the liberals who formed his base in 1999 have grown so disillusioned by his pandering to the ultra-Orthodox and his

clumsy handling of the peace process that they're considering not voting at all. Yossi Sarid, head of the dovish Meretz Party, opened his TV ad endorsing Barak with an extraordinary appeal to fellow leftists—"Like many of you, I've also wanted to punish Ehud Barak"—before arguing that Sharon's election would be too great a punishment, so there's no choice but to vote for Barak.

Peres, hardly more generous, began his TV ad for the prime minister by noting, "It's no secret that Ehud and I have had our difficulties." Those include leaks to the press about what Peres really thinks of Barak—such as doubts about his trustworthiness and his commitment to peace. Indeed, Barak sometimes appears to be running not only against Sharon but also against Peres, whose supporters have placed ads in the press demanding that Barak step aside and "let Peres win." Only a few weeks ago, Peres was universally considered Israel's least electable politician. But now that title probably belongs to Barak. And, although the prime minister mockingly noted that Peres always wins in the polls and loses the election, the Peres campaign (which Peres himself has only tepidly tried to restrain) has fatally demoralized Labor. A key Barak campaign leader concedes, "I know how to handle Sharon, but I don't know how to handle Peres."

Some in the Labor Party suspect that Peres actually prefers Sharon to Barak. It's not simply that Peres and Sharon are old friends: They both oppose Barak's attempts to reach a comprehensive peace rather than settle for another interim agreement. Indeed, a source close to Peres says the Labor leader has already decided to join a Sharon government as foreign minister—emulating Moshe Dayan, who quit Labor in 1977 to become foreign minister in Israel's first Likud government. Sharon, for his part, will desperately need the international legitimacy Peres can offer.

Barak is now trying to wait out Peres's supporters. According to Israeli law, a party cannot switch candidates within 96 hours of an election. And so Barak believes that once the four-day deadline passes and a Peres candidacy becomes impossible, the left will come back to him by default.

But that's just the Jewish left. Labor candidates also need strong support among Israeli Arabs, a crucial counterweight to the right-leaning ultra-Orthodox. And though more than 90 percent of Israeli Arabs backed Barak in 1999, his ratings among them are now so low that Labor refuses to release its polls of the Arab sector. The killing of 13 Israeli Arabs by police during last fall's riots so embittered the community that Barak was initially told he was unwelcome in Arab areas, and Labor was forced to send surrogate campaigners like Peres and Sarid. So far, few seem convinced by Labor ads in the Arab press warning against the danger of Sharon and recalling his old comments impugning the loyalty of Israeli Arabs. Even Arabs I know who are committed to integrating into Israeli society are now debating which move better expresses their alienation: submitting a blank ballot or not voting altogether.

In this surrealistic election, left and right have exchanged places, at least in tone. Traditionally, labor campaigns exude optimism, while right-wing campaigns focus on exploding buses and the threat of Israel's dismemberment. But now it's the left that sounds apocalyptic. Barak has embarked on a

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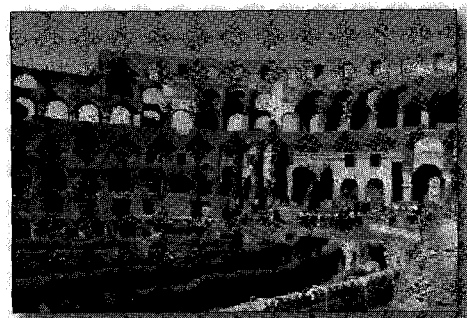
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campaign of straight talk, rejecting the slick Americanization of recent Israeli elections. It's the gimmick of anti-gimmickry: The situation is so grim, Barak is implicitly saying, that I must address you directly, without the jingles and fields of swaying wheat and hopeful Israeli faces that fill Sharon's ads. If Barak's strategy isn't quite working, it's because the grim situation was created by Barak himself.

ONE NIGHT RECENTLY, the Likud's senior campaign staff gathered in a Tel Aviv hotel for that essential Israeli election ritual: the inaugural screening of the TV ads. Every night, the Barak and Sharon segments, condensed into a single program, debate each other in dizzying proximity; the next morning, politicians, p.r. consultants, and even body-language experts debate each other in the newspapers over whose ads won.

The Likud Knesset members sat in the front row; behind them were dozens of local party activists. Barak opened his ad with an admission of failure, apologizing for not consulting more with his colleagues. "Dial-an-apology," cackled one Likud Knesset member.

Then tanks from the Lebanon war filled the screen, along with Barak's warning of more deaths to come unless he is reelected. "As if we don't have funerals every day!" someone shouted. Then Sharon appeared, speaking Russian; the mostly Sephardic crowd laughed and applauded. Barak returned, promising not to cede sovereignty over the Temple Mount. "Liar!" people shouted.

A mother of a soldier appeared: "People say that all Barak has done was bring us out of Lebanon. That's all? That's a lot!" The crowd fell silent: Barak's first effective ad. Then came Sharon's upbeat jingle, and everyone clapped along: "Sharon will bring peace, a peace that will protect us."

Since then, Barak's ads have improved, focusing on hard issues such as Sharon's past opposition to every peace treaty with an Arab country, including Jordan. The Sharon ads, though, still offer beautiful landscapes and smiling faces—one columnist has likened them to a travelogue about Chechnya. The inane tone is deliberate. Sharon campaign staffers compare themselves to a winning team in the last moments of the game, whose goal is merely to prevent major mistakes and run out the clock. So Sharon promises the peace of the strong, and when Israeli journalists ask him about Lebanon he just smiles. The ads focusing on his heroic military past mysteriously end with the 1973 war. His peace sloganeering isn't really meant to convince voters that he'll bring peace—merely that he won't bring war.

Yet, for all its success, Likud's campaign faces a delicate balancing act. Sharon must energize the hard-core right, especially the settlers, who in the past have provided many of Likud's street activists. But doing so risks confirming Labor's argument that Sharon is captive to the far right. He is vulnerable either way. When Sharon recently released his blueprint for an interim agreement with the Palestinians, he angered settlers by endorsing a Palestinian state and a freeze on new settlements, while at the same time exposing himself to attacks from Labor and Palestinian spokesmen, who denounced his plan to suspend further territorial conces-

sions as an invitation to war.

Even riskier is Sharon's effort to widen his support among the ultra-Orthodox without alienating the deeply secular Russians. Though they constitute only 7 percent of the population, the ultra-Orthodox are a formidable bloc: When their rabbis endorse a candidate, community activists ensure near-total voter participation, emptying out the nursing homes on Election Day and even sometimes "resurrecting" the recently deceased by recycling their identity cards.

Sharon, once the rabbis' favorite general, angered them recently by voting against wholesale draft deferments for yeshiva students. So far, few of the leading rabbis have endorsed him, which means much of the community may sit out the election. According to a key ultra-Orthodox Likud activist, Sharon's only recourse is to appear before the rabbis and declare his appreciation for yeshiva students who study Torah but evade the draft. The problem is that such a declaration would be a gift to Labor's Russian campaign. So acute are the Likud's fears of a Russian backlash that any ad intended for the ultra-Orthodox press must first be cleared by the leaders of Sharon's campaign.

Likud's most dangerous balancing act of all, though, is Sharon himself. His handlers, wary of militant statements that would undermine his peace message, have mostly kept him away from the press. But excerpts from a recent interview Sharon granted *The New Yorker*—in which he made an insulting reference to Muslims who turn their backs and "also some of [their] lower parts" to the Temple Mount when they prostrate themselves toward Mecca—have done more to harm his credibility than any of the old quotes about Lebanon that Labor has retrieved from the archives.

Indeed, the determining factor in this election could well be the news. Every Palestinian outrage—such as the recent murder of an Israeli teenager lured to an ambush via an Internet chat room or the Ramallah demonstration featuring a donkey dressed in a yarmulke and a prayer shawl—reminds Israelis why Sharon, who not long ago was considered almost as unelectable as Peres, has become the leading candidate. Barak, meanwhile, is hoping the renewal of peace talks will produce a framework agreement that convinces Israelis to reelect him: the peace equivalent of the attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor that helped Menachem Begin win in 1981. Yet the negotiations—conducted by a nonexistent government two weeks before elections and in an atmosphere of ongoing violence—are only deepening voters' skepticism about Barak and their despair about the peace he is offering.

A few days after Barak held a campaign rally in Mitzpeh Ramon, I passed through this sleepy desert town known for its massive crater and high unemployment rate. Though it was midday, the Likud and Labor headquarters—adjacent to each other—were both closed. The Likud office at least boasted a banner hailing Sharon as a "leader for peace"; Barak's name was nowhere to be seen.

Instead of party activists, I found a Russian immigrant handyman smoking a cigarette in the weak winter sun. "Sharon will bring peace?" he asked rhetorically. "Barak will bring peace? No one will bring peace, because there is no peace for the Jews on this earth. We made a big mistake coming here. We should have built a Jewish state on the moon." ■

**Cheney versus Powell, round two.**

# Containment

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

**W**HEN IT COMES to wielding American power abroad, our bureaucratic actors have their lines memorized. The State Department takes an activist stance; the Pentagon, crippled by the “lessons” of Vietnam, counsels restraint. Think of the battles between Ronald Reagan’s Pentagon chief, Caspar Weinberger, and his secretary of state, George Shultz, who complained that America was turning into “the Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond” to adversaries. Or Madeleine Albright’s famous query to then-Joint Chiefs Chairman Colin Powell: “What’s the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?”

Although George W. Bush probably doesn’t know it, his administration may be about to reverse the equation—pitting a State Department team that cautions against becoming a “global policeman” against a Pentagon team that believes America should be even more than that. To the State Department, Powell brings his peculiar brand of military pacifism. Meanwhile, and despite the former general’s best efforts, Vice President Dick Cheney has quietly been stocking the Defense Department with outspoken interventionists. It’s not that he necessarily shares their ideology. Rather, their foreign policy agenda intersects with his bureaucratic one. During the cold war, Cheney had a guiding foreign policy principle: anti-communism. And today he’s guided by another principle. It’s called anti-Powellism.

Cheney dismisses reports of conflict between himself and Powell as “just so much Washington hype.” Believe the hype. Whether the issue was Soviet intentions, ejecting Iraq from Kuwait, or Powell’s forecasts about the international scene, Cheney spent much of his four years as Poppy’s defense secretary trying to contain Powell. Now the jockeying has picked up where it left off a decade ago. Cheney has effectively created his own foreign policy apparatus, installing his protégés (and, in the case of Donald Rumsfeld, his mentor) at the Defense Department and the White House. And, because many of Cheney’s protégés are known for their willingness to use military force, what began as a clash of personalities is fast becoming a war of ideas. Their views have already put them in direct conflict with not only Powell but

also National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, who, though not quite as rigid as Powell, nonetheless tends toward a crabbed view of America’s global role. Not long ago, Bush said of his foreign policy advisers, “There’s going to be disagreements. I hope there is disagreement.” He has no idea.

Rice and Powell’s antipathy to foreign interventions is well-known. For Rice, they should be undertaken only in the “national interest.” And, because in her view the national interest reduces to material interests, the Bush team will necessarily “be more selective in our military involvements,” as she explained during the campaign. Her deputy, Stephen Hadley, sings the same tune. As an official in the prior Bush administration, Hadley said America should resist intervening in Bosnia because “our own forces could then become the objects of attack,” and during the 2000 campaign he scored the Clinton administration for being “too quick to reach out to the military instrument.”

But, compared with Powell, Rice sounds like Curtis LeMay. As Joint Chiefs chairman under Bush père and Cheney, Powell fought tooth and nail against using force in the Gulf and the Balkans (see “Yesterday’s Man,” *TNR*, January 1 & 8). The Powell Doctrine summarizes the reigning conventional wisdom of the post-Vietnam officer corps: Deploy the Armed Forces only when the interest is “vital” and



success is assured, and do so overwhelmingly or not at all—preferably the latter. To bolster this view, Powell has installed as head of the State Department's Policy Planning Office Richard Haass, a Brookings Institution scholar who argues that American foreign policy should adjust to the inexorable reality of American decline. And, as his deputy, Powell has named Richard Armitage, his best friend and a promoter of his restrictive military doctrine.

Outside his own department, however, Powell has been losing bureaucratic battle after bureaucratic battle to Cheney's hawks. Powell made his first mistake at the press conference announcing his appointment, where he ruminated about everything from race to the military budget. "He sounded like Al Haig," says one incredulous member of the Cheney camp. "He must have thought they would put a featherweight at the Pentagon and so he'd be running that too." And, in fact, Powell immediately set about trying to install his favorite candidate for secretary of defense, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. But Cheney vetoed Ridge. When the focus then shifted to Paul Wolfowitz, a prominent neoconservative and Cheney favorite, Powell's associates retaliated, letting it be known that the graduate school dean was a "bad manager"—a charge that resonated with Bush advisers intent on avoiding another Les Aspin, President Clinton's disastrous Pentagon chief. Wolfowitz, Powell's allies whispered, was also too hawkish on Iraq for the general's tastes.

Although Wolfowitz didn't get the Pentagon job, Cheney prevailed when the White House—without notifying Powell beforehand—nominated the vice president's old mentor Rumsfeld. In a bid to retain leverage at the Defense Department, Powell then championed his friend Armitage for its number-two slot. But not only did Rumsfeld reject Armitage, whom he considered too close to Powell; he chose Wolfowitz in his place.

CHENEY POSSESSES A straightforward belief in the coercive power of military strength. "His guiding principle is toughness," says an associate of Cheney's. "He's not so much an ideas guy. He just doesn't want to take any crap from adversaries." As it happens, that's also an apt description of Rumsfeld. The press has painted the two-time defense secretary as the embodiment of Ford-administration blandness. That's absurd. Rumsfeld, a former fighter pilot known to boast about how many push-ups he could do, was a foreign policy heretic in an administration where détente with the Soviet Union was practically a religion. Rumsfeld torpedoed the strategy nearly single-handedly, scuttling the SALT II accord over Kissinger's and Ford's objections.

Unlike many conservatives, Rumsfeld has remained committed to American primacy even in the absence of Soviet communism. Though he got his job partly because of his assertive chairmanship of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threats to the United States, in the late '90s, Rumsfeld stands for more than missile defense. On all the major foreign policy issues of our day—Iran, Iraq, North Korea, China, Russia, European efforts to build an independent army, even the defects of the Powell Doctrine—Rumsfeld is an outspoken hawk. Nor does he view America's values

and strategic aims as inherently incompatible, as Powell and Rice do. "We need to strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values," declared a statement of foreign policy principles that Rumsfeld and a group of neoconservatives drafted two years ago for the Project for a New American Century, an organization that lobbies for an activist foreign policy. "We need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity and our principles."

RUMSFELD'S DEPUTY, WOLFOWITZ, is even more hawkish than his boss—as well as being the most intellectual member of Bush's foreign policy team. (While Chevron may have named an oil tanker after Condoleezza Rice during the campaign, Wolfowitz was the model for a character in Saul Bellow's latest novel, *Ravelstein*.) Wolfowitz made his Washington debut in the mid-'70s as a member of Team B, a group of conservative foreign policy hands whose 1976 report turned on its head the intelligence community's and Henry Kissinger's benign reading of Soviet intentions. During the Reagan administration, he quickly rose through the State Department and Pentagon ranks; when Bush père won the presidency, he awarded Wolfowitz the number-three job at the Pentagon. There he served as one of the architects of the Gulf war and, more important, as Cheney's right-hand man.

His worldview runs completely counter to that of Powell and Rice. "I can't think of anyone else who's as knowledgeable about the Pentagon and at the same time is as committed to the role of values in U.S. foreign policy," says Wolfowitz friend and former State Department official Elliott Abrams. Writing last year in *The National Interest*, Wolfowitz complained, "Nothing could be less realistic than the versions of the 'realist' view of foreign policy that dismisses human rights, an important tool of American foreign policy." And, in 1992, Wolfowitz provoked an uproar at both ends of the political spectrum when, as undersecretary for policy at the Pentagon, he advised exploiting America's military supremacy for the purpose of "detering potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role."

Wolfowitz brings with him to the administration a retinue of thinkers who agree with that aim. One of his former deputies, I. Lewis Libby—whom associates describe as "Wolfowitz's Wolfowitz"—is Cheney's new chief of staff. Working for Libby will be Eric Edelman, also a Wolfowitz colleague in Bush senior's Pentagon. Other like-minded associates will be working right beside him at the Defense Department. The White House has brought in former Reagan official William Schneider to aid its Pentagon transition, and Bush advisers claim a senior Defense post, probably undersecretary for policy, is his for the taking. Zalmay Khalilzad, a Wolfowitz protégé and transition official, will also be offered a high-ranking Pentagon slot. A veteran of Reagan's Afghanistan team, Khalilzad's reputation derives largely from his history of championing armed insurgencies. In 1992, he and Wolfowitz were among the lone voices in the Bush administration pushing to arm the Bosnian Muslims. More recently, Khalilzad took to the op-ed pages twice in one month to tout two

separate insurgencies—one in Kosovo, the other in Iraq. And more neocons are waiting in the wings. At think tanks across Washington, conservatives whom Powell has locked out of the State Department have been rerouting their resumé across the Potomac.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RIFT within Team Bush has already led to disputes on three major areas: Iraq, the Balkans, and China. The disagreements on Iraq date back to the first Bush administration, when Powell successfully argued for halting the war after only four days and denying aid to Iraqi insurgents—effectively ensuring that Saddam Hussein remained in power. Nor does Powell appear to have modified his dim view of the Iraqi opposition: As recently as a few weeks ago, he was belittling its effectiveness during State Department meetings. Wolfowitz, by contrast, has spent much of the past decade lobbying for aid to the Iraqi rebels. He still chafes at the memory of Powell shooting down his plea, in the aftermath of the Gulf war, for the United States to stop Iraqi helicopter flights that were used to slaughter Iraqi insurgents. “We were so eager to get out of that war we let Iraqi helicopters massacre Shiites,” Wolfowitz recounted in 1999. “Eight years later, we’re still dealing with Saddam Hussein.” Rumsfeld and Schneider have joined Wolfowitz in demanding that America aid the opposition’s efforts to overthrow Saddam. And Cheney himself met recently with the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmed Chalabi.

In the Balkans, the story is much the same. Early in the campaign, the Bush team split publicly over the war in Kosovo. And, last year, Rice threw the Atlantic alliance into turmoil when she announced that Bush would bring U.S. troops back from Bosnia and Kosovo. Powell, who spent much of the ’90s complaining that America had no “vital interest” in the Balkans, also speaks of reducing America’s military presence in the region. Rumsfeld, by contrast, called on the Clinton administration to halt Serb depredations in Bosnia as early as 1994. Two years ago, while many conservatives were demanding an end to the Kosovo intervention, Rumsfeld argued for its escalation. And, at his confirmation hearings, Rumsfeld flatly contradicted Powell on withdrawing troops from the Balkans, describing efforts to set deadlines as “precipitous.” Wolfowitz and Khalilzad also support an aggressive Balkan policy; their disputes with Powell on the subject date back as far as their disagreements about Iraq.

But the most important issue dividing the Bushies is China. Powell has been packing the State Department with foreign service and Pentagon Asia hands known for their conciliatory stance toward Beijing, and he has reportedly been advising of the need to “engage in an educational process” to enlighten the administration’s China hawks. Similarly, Rice attempted—unsuccessfully—to soften the party platform’s China language at last summer’s GOP convention. Rumsfeld, by contrast, cautions that China intends to challenge U.S. influence in Asia and accuses those who doubt China’s stance of “self-delusion.” And the Taiwanese press reports that Wolfowitz, a long-standing friend of Taiwan, met with its officials on Inauguration Day. Indeed, some predict that one of Bush’s first foreign policy moves—one likely

to split his team down the middle—may be approval of a sizable package of arms sales to Taiwan. On China, as former Reagan defense official Frank Gaffney puts it, the Rumsfeld team “might wind up giving Powell a needed education.”

CHINA AND IRAQ aren’t the only areas where the Cheney camp appears poised to roll over Powell. Despite Powell’s stature and Rice’s close relationship with the president, most observers think that, ultimately, the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz troika will set administration policy on *every* major strategic issue.

To begin with, there is the widespread assumption that Cheney will more or less run the White House—particularly in areas, such as foreign policy, where Bush has evinced little interest and even less knowledge. Cheney has already given his chief of staff, former Wolfowitz aide Libby, the additional title of national security adviser to the vice president—a move that provides Libby with added heft in interagency foreign policy meetings. More notable still, sources close to the Bush team say Cheney has taken steps to establish what they describe as his own “shadow” national security council, replete with upward of a dozen regional experts. Gore, too, had a sizable national security staff—to work on his binational commissions. What’s Cheney’s rationale? The Bush team, after all, is simultaneously *reducing* the number of staffers on the official NSC and has shot down the idea of giving Rice Cabinet rank.

Bolstering Cheney’s White House clout is his ally Rumsfeld, who has already proved himself a bureaucratic infighter without equal. On several occasions during the Ford administration, Rumsfeld bested Kissinger, who later described him as “a special Washington phenomenon: the skilled full-time politician-bureaucrat in whom ambition, ability and substance fuse seamlessly.”

Powell, of course, got where he is largely as a result of his own bureaucratic skills. But they may do him less good today than when he was in uniform. That’s partly because he has fewer allies: Unlike the Cheney-Rumsfeld partisans, who have supporters throughout the administration, Powell is largely isolated at the State Department, a general without an army. But Powell is further hobbled by his distaste for ideology (“If you’re looking for an ideologue,” he said in 1995, “that’s not me”). And that distaste has led him to surround himself at the State Department with foreign service officers and middle-management types. “He only wants managerial technocrats,” says one conservative candidate passed over for a State Department billet. “He wants to run State like it’s an Army base.” While Powell’s personnel strategy will cement his control over the department, it may weaken his position in the administration as a whole. That’s because, in the foreign policy world, it’s the political types—not the bureaucrats—who enjoy long-standing relationships with their counterparts at other agencies and wield clout throughout the government.

As for Rice, her stature shrinks by the day. This is partly her own doing. As the campaign entered its final weeks, she committed a serious flub, provoking an uproar with her suggestion that the United States establish “a new division of labor”

with its European allies, which, among other things, might require them to police the Balkans by themselves. The Europeans went ballistic. Following close behind were America's editorial pages, Democratic Party operatives, and, finally, the Bush campaign itself. Rice also finds herself club-sandwiched between Powell, Rumsfeld, and Cheney. In foreign policy deliberations, national security advisers often prevail by sheer virtue of their proximity to the president, and Rice, to be sure, will be close to Bush. Problem is, Cheney will be closer, and he's prime minister. What's more, although Rice and Powell seem philosophically in tune, the general appears to view her less as an ally than as a competitor: According to several Bush advisers, Powell has demanded, and been assured, that Rice's duties won't impede his ability to guide U.S. foreign policy. Rather, members of the Bush team predict, Rice will manage the day-to-day interagency paper flow and keep the trains running on time. "She's going to be crushed," declares one Rumsfeld ally. "It's as simple as that."

Ultimately, though, Cheney's allies at the Pentagon may prevail in disputes with Powell and Rice because of their sheer organizational mass. The Pentagon will be funded next year to the tune of \$300 billion. The State Department will be lucky if it receives one-tenth that amount. "Because of the enormous resources at its disposal," explains General William Odom, the former National Security Agency chief and senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, "the Pentagon defines foreign policy in ways no other department, including the State Department, can."

In fact, even in the absence of strong leadership, the Pentagon (along with the Treasury Department) has essentially been running U.S. foreign policy for a decade now. The Pentagon routinely vetoes or approves major policy shifts. Its theater commanders and their entourages lord like proconsuls over entire regions of the globe. (In fact, a certain general-cum-national-icon has done as much as anyone to give the Pentagon an outsized say in post-cold-war foreign policy.) In any case, most of the issues dividing the Bush team directly concern the use of force. And those are precisely the decisions on which the secretary of defense carries more weight than his Foggy Bottom counterpart.

Oddly enough, the Pentagon team's biggest problem may be the Pentagon itself. The opposition to the use of force in nearly any circumstance has become canonical among the officer corps. Rumsfeld's enthusiasm for missile defense, in particular, grates on many general officers, who worry that the project will consume their own funds. Yet, when he held the same post in the Ford administration, Rumsfeld acquired a reputation for exercising strict political control. Officers grumbled when he canceled weapons programs and publicly humiliated generals who dared to challenge his authority. But that's what a good secretary of defense does. "The secretary of defense is not a supergeneral or admiral," Rumsfeld instructs in his book, *Rumsfeld's Rules*. "His task is to exercise civilian control over the department for the commander in chief and the country." With any luck, he'll exercise some over Colin Powell as well. ■

## Toward a sociology of the Bushies.

# After Meritocracy

By FRANKLIN FOER

**E**IGHT YEARS AGO, the Clinton administration ushered in what seemed like a social revolution. The Clintonites didn't just bring an ideology to Washington; they brought a caste. Gone were Poppy's crusty boarding-school WASPS. In their place was a new kind of elite: multicultural, aggressively brainy, confident they owed their success not to birth or blood but to talent alone. "Perhaps more than any in our history," wrote *The Washington Post's* David Ignatius, "Clinton's is a government of smart people." Or at least credentialed people. The White House staff alone boasted six Rhodes scholars. One-third of President Clinton's 518 earliest appointments had attended Harvard or Yale—or both. The president called his staff "the top ranks of a new generation."

The self-congratulation was grating. But it contained a grain of sociological truth. When George H.W. Bush, James Baker, and Nicholas Brady entered the Ivy League, admission still depended largely on pedigree. By the time Clinton,

Robert Reich, and George Stephanopoulos got there, admission was based on grades and SAT scores. The Clinton administration symbolized the transfer of power from one elite to a different, more meritocratic one. "It's tempting," wrote Nicholas Lemann on the *New York Times* op-ed page two months before Clinton's inauguration, "to regard the ascendancy of the meritocracy as a sort of 'end of history' of American elites."

Eight years later, the end of that end of history of American elites has arrived. Of George W. Bush's 14 Cabinet members, only two went to Ivy League colleges. His staff contains no Rhodes scholars. Where Clinton packed his administration with intellectuals, Bush's Cabinet boasts only one Ph.D., Secretary of Education Rod Paige—and his doctorate is in physical education.

Some have described W's administration as a kind of class restoration: a return to country-club elitism in the guise of cowboy-boot populism. But, while it's true that Bush has

exhumed some of his father's old cronies, his administration does not represent the revenge of the Protestant establishment. It couldn't. The Protestant establishment that shaped W.'s father is dead—there is not a single powerful American institution that remains exclusively in WASP hands.

Sociologically, the new Bush administration represents something more contemporary, and more interesting: a second successor elite, also descended from the Protestant establishment but with an ethic entirely different from that of its "meritocrat" cousins. If the WASP elite handed over the Ivy League universities and top law firms to the meritocrats, it gave the leadership of corporate America, the military, and the Republican Party to an entirely different group, a group that shares not an ethnicity but a common experience: the organization men.

The organization men who dominate W.'s administration have credentials, but not educational ones. They amassed them by ascending through the ranks of large institutions—government bureaucracy (Paul O'Neill, Dick Cheney), corporations (Don Evans), the military (Colin Powell), and the Republican Party (Mel Martinez, Tommy Thompson). As Lemann wrote in *The Big Test*, while the defining events in the meritocrat's life are standardized tests, the career of the organization man (or "lifer," in Lemann's parlance) is defined by his promotions. He may be personally ambitious, but he has developed values suited to institutional life: loyalty, hard work, managerial competence, a profound sense of caution.

These virtues are hardly insignificant. Not only are the Bushies more disciplined than the Clintonites, they are less arrogant. It is this discipline and humility that largely accounts for the success of the Bush transition, and for the success Bush will likely have in passing his agenda in the coming months. But the same qualities that today look so valuable may one day become an albatross. The Clintonites were at home with chaos, which was a good thing, given how much of it they created. But some chaos is inevitable, and it demands an ability to entertain new, even heretical ideas and to improvise—something the organization men have spent their lifetimes learning not to do.

**I**F THE CLINTONITES had a manifesto that defined their sense of themselves, it was Robert Reich's 1991 book *The Work of Nations*. A professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Reich was the quintessential Friend of Bill. He had studied with Clinton at Oxford and Yale Law School, and the two seemed to meld minds. *The New York Times* detailed how "large parts of Mr. Clinton's Putting People First economic program seemed to be plucked" straight from Reich's book. Both works described an America struggling to adapt to a transformed economic reality.

In his book, Reich identifies a heroic figure who can save the American economy in the postindustrial age. He is, in Reich's phrase, "the symbolic analyst." At first glance, the symbolic analyst is an unlikely savior. He is a bit of a geek—a lawyer, journalist, management consultant, stockbroker, academic, or software designer. He is anyone who can "simplify reality into abstract images that can be rearranged, juggled, experimented with, communicated to other specialists

and then, eventually, transformed back into reality." Or, without the jargon: The symbolic analyst is a member of the brainy elite that has profited from the new information economy. He is "skeptical, curious and creative"—the opposite of a stodgy corporate CEO. Salvation, Reich argues, lies in cultivating these symbolic analysts. The government must educate more of them. It should even subsidize the ones it has.

Clinton subsidized symbolic analysts in the most direct way possible: He employed them. The Clinton administration was stocked with management consultants (Ira Magaziner, Susan Rice), academics (Lawrence Summers, Laura Tyson, Donna Shalala), investment bankers (Robert Rubin, Erskine Bowles), journalists (Strobe Talbott), and lawyers (practically everyone else). Guided by a parade of theorists—Amitai Etzioni, William Galston, David Osborne, Michael Lerner—the Clintonites set out to solve America's problems by thinking smarter thoughts than anyone before them.

Almost immediately, the project went awry. While the Clintonites saw themselves as gloriously democratic, they struck observers as deeply insular. Writing in these pages, Jacob Weisberg called it "Clincest"—the administration was enclosed within an arrogant clique of interconnected Rhodes scholars, Yale Law grads, and elite journalists. "The Clinton circle has a pronounced class consciousness that tells them they're not just lucky to be here," Weisberg wrote. "They're running things because they're the best." In 1993, the historian Stephen Ambrose said of Clinton, "I don't know anyone who's gone so far appointing friends and cronies since Warren G. Harding."

The hubris was best reflected, of course, in health care reform. Under the stewardship of Ira Magaziner—who wrote a book on industrial policy with Reich, his fellow Rhodie—the symbolic analysts went to work designing a solution to one of America's most entrenched social problems. Five hundred eleven wonks conceived a 1,342-page plan for reconstructing 14 percent of the economy. Toiling in closed-door conference rooms, Magaziner's wonk army was supposed to produce an utterly rational system—uncorrupted by the dirty, stupid, selfish world of politicians and interest groups. And, indeed, Magaziner produced a health care plan that was thoroughly rational; it was also mind-numbingly complex, hopelessly bureaucratic, and the product of an undemocratic process. And it almost ruined Clinton's first term.

**W**ITHIN TWO YEARS of Clinton's election, his cadre of meritocrats had produced one of the most ferocious right-wing populist backlashes in modern American history. Newt Gingrich railed against Washington's "corrupt elite." Bob Dole called the new administration "a corps of the elite who ... never did anything real."

What the Clintonites called meritocracy conservatives had long called "the New Class": a cadre of elites educated in the 1960s who had inherited the Protestant establishment's institutions while waging war on its values. Viewed from the right, the Clintonites exhibited all the evils of intellectuals: a love of abstraction, a hostility to tradition and order, a

predilection for social engineering.

As George W. Bush entered politics, he was educated in this social theory of the right. When W. contemplated running for governor in 1993, his political tutor, Karl Rove, insisted that he read the works of David Horowitz and Myron Magnet, both of whom accused intellectuals of unmooring society from its bedrock values. (Horowitz dubbed the '60s elite the "destructive generation.") And when Rove began organizing Bush's presidential bid in the summer of 1998, he once again turned to Horowitz and Magnet, importing them to Austin to lecture the governor on the new class and the roots of cultural decay.

W. proved a receptive pupil. Horowitz's and Magnet's screeds against the intellectual elite jibed with his own brush with the destructive generation at Yale. An apolitical cheerleader and Bud Man, Bush arrived in New Haven in the late '60s, just as the fun-loving, prep-school ethos that he epitomized was giving way to the tyranny of the SAT. Nothing illustrated Bush's alienation from this new world better than his hatred of Strobe Talbott. Chairman of the *Yale Daily News*, Rhodes scholar, and meritocrat par excellence, Talbott irked Bush to no end. To borrow the WASP term of art, Talbott, who would later become Clinton's foreign policy guru, was a "grind," a first-rate party pooper. To this day, *The New York Times* has reported, Bush still carps about him.

Indeed, W.'s populism frequently expresses itself as anti-intellectualism. Last summer, in *The Washington Post*, he denounced people who think "they're all of a sudden smarter than the average person because they happen to have an Ivy League degree." During the campaign, he mocked Al Gore for alluding to the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty in an interview with *The New Yorker*.

Not surprisingly, then, Bush has crafted an administration largely devoid of intellectuals. In fact, the conservative intelligentsia that developed the very critique of intellectuals to which W. subscribes has fallen victim to its own theory. Almost all the wonks who traveled to Austin to instruct Bush in policy—Stephen Goldsmith, Christopher DeMuth, Diane Ravitch, John DiIulio, Paul Wolfowitz, Martin Anderson—have either been ignored in the transition or handed second-tier positions. As *Newsweek* reported, frustrated conservatives have created an acronym for the administration: NINA, for "No Intellectuals Need Apply."

Bush has stocked his administration with a different category of people. He has embraced the old Protestant establishment's concept of merit—merit not as brainpower but as "character." (This is what Bush means when he describes virtually each one of his appointees as a "good man" with "good judgment.") That concept lives on among the WASPs' heirs, the organization men.

**L**IKE THE CLINTONITE meritocrats, the Bushie organization men have a manifesto. Over the course of a long career in Washington—heading up agencies, administrations, and departments—Donald Rumsfeld has compiled dozens of aphorisms, which were published as *Rumsfeld's Rules*. Some he conceived himself; others he filched from conversations with

Washington wise men. If *The Work of Nations* is based on brainpower, *Rumsfeld's Rules* is based on experience.

And, not surprisingly, while *The Work of Nations* glorifies "symbolic analysts," *Rumsfeld's Rules* honors the organization man. The ideal government servant, Rumsfeld says, is unswervingly loyal to his boss, cautious in giving advice, and never strident in espousing his positions. Most importantly, he is humble on all occasions. He never glorifies himself to the press. While the symbolic analyst is essentially independent, with skills transferable from company to company or even nation to nation, Rumsfeld's organization man sublimates his identity to his employer, in this case the government. "Don't begin to believe that you are indispensable or infallible, and don't let the President, or others, think you are. You're not," he writes. It is impossible not to read *Rumsfeld's Rules* in the context of Rumsfeld's career—as a "memo to self." Although famous for fighting bureaucratic turf wars with the ferocity of a terrier, Rumsfeld seems to be urging himself to tamp down his ambitions. He is always reciting the organization man's motto: Slow and steady wins the race.

**R**UMSFELD PUBLISHED HIS book in 1989, well after most of the Bush organization men had established themselves. But he might as well have been their career counselor. Nearly all are self-made men who worked their way up in organizations using Rumsfeldian techniques. You can see it in the career of Paul O'Neill. His biography is brutally boring but inspiring nonetheless. To pay his way through Fresno State, he bagged groceries. Then he began his methodical ascent through the civil service and business: five years as a computer systems analyst for the Department of Veterans Affairs, then assistant director of the Office of Management and Budget, associate director of OMB, deputy director of OMB, vice president of the International Paper Company, senior vice president of International Paper, chairman of Alcoa. Unlike the Clinton whiz kids, he didn't skip a single weigh station on his way to the top. He survived from administration to administration by displaying obvious intelligence and becoming expert at massaging egos and building alliances. Never did he strike too strident an ideological stance.

The O'Neill story is repeated throughout the Cabinet. Colin Powell's organization was the military. A working-class kid from the Bronx with mediocre grades, he rose up through the Pentagon hierarchy step by step. Like O'Neill, he aligned himself with all the right Washington power-houses. He performed tasks with admirable acumen. His promotions and friendships and skills, however, couldn't cure him of his acute anxiety about his status within the organization. As Lemann noted in a review of Powell's memoir, "Never, ever, does Powell lose sight of where he stands in the Army hierarchy." Even when he won appointment to positions in the highest reaches of government, he fixated on his Army rank. When he became Ronald Reagan's national security adviser, Powell fretted that the White House might ask him to take a demotion from three-star general to two-star to avoid confirmation hearings.

Powell's ethnicity and class background has nothing in common with the Bushes', but you can see the basis of their

affinity for one another: Powell has imbibed the WASP elite's love of loyalty, propriety, and prudence. And he deeply distrusts the ethic of the meritocrats. In Powell's memoir, Lemann points out, terms like "expert" and "academic" are clearly derogatory. He recalls the assessment he gave Clinton of rumpled Defense Secretary Les Aspin: "Smart's not everything in running the Pentagon." And, in one moment of surprising candor, Powell describes George Stephanopoulos as "a high school valedictorian with a good tailor."

Intellectuals, Powell suggests, are not simply disorganized; their lack of experience makes them reckless. As with most organization men, the professional caution that marked Powell's rise to the top also manifests itself in his views about policy. As chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell fought ex-academic Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when she proposed that the United States bomb the Serbs. During the Gulf war, Powell was adamant that the Army halt before it reached Baghdad. He even elevated his careful instincts into a doctrine, which posits that force should be used only in the rare instances when it will assuredly succeed.

Indeed, while Bush's Cabinet has been described—with the exception of John Ashcroft and Gale Norton—as moderate, it's less because its members are committed to Rockefeller Republicanism than because they are suspicious of ideology altogether. They don't propose daring policy. If they have any ideology at all, it's the one encapsulated in *Rumsfeld's Rules*—an ideology of organizational management. Introducing his appointments, Bush never talks about educational credentials or intellectual creativity. Instead, he harps on their managerial ability and experience, as in this description of Mel Martinez: "He's an administrator. He's a good executive."

**T**HE ADVANTAGE OF a highly cautious, highly disciplined administration is that it keeps its eye on the ball: no endless meetings, no intellectual tangents, no fighting over first principles. In Texas, Bush set a simple four-part agenda: juvenile justice reform, tort reform, education reform, welfare reform. He hewed carefully to the script and made it clear that he expected his aides to focus on little else. And it worked: Bush got much of his agenda passed.

In Washington, Bush is following the same pattern. He has another four-part agenda—education reform, tax cuts, increased military spending, entitlement reform. Each week his administration will focus, laserlike, on one issue—no distractions permitted. By deploying overwhelming political force on a small number of issues carefully selected for political advantage, the Bush administration is following its own kind of Powell Doctrine: Don't get drawn into situations where you aren't sure you can win.

So far, at least, Washington has applauded. Numerous commentators have drawn positive contrasts with the much more chaotic beginning of the Clinton administration—when fights about Cabinet nominees and the uproar over gays in the military immediately distracted the president from his agenda. But what few seem to remember is that the Clinton administration's success often depended precisely

on its willingness to abandon its agenda in response to changing events. When the Clintonites came to power, they planned to implement their economic platform, which called for old-fashioned Keynesian pump-priming. But, within months of the election, they radically shifted course and pursued deficit reduction instead. Partly, this shift was the result of politics—a concession to deficit hawks in Congress. But it was also the product of a prolonged debate, a grander version of the famed Clintonian bull session. It began at the economic summit held in Little Rock a month before Clinton's inauguration. And it continued in the White House, where fiscal conservatives (Lloyd Bentsen, Leon Panetta) argued with the labor unions and the more aggressively Keynesian scholars (Reich, Tyson)—and came up with an unprecedented economic strategy that worked miracles.

Similarly, the president was taken entirely by surprise by the 1995 collapse of the Mexican peso—a situation for which liberal economic policy had no obvious solution. The administration, aided by intellectuals like Rubin and Summers, improvised a \$20 billion bailout after wide-ranging, often highly theoretical debates. Two years later, the Clintonites arranged an even larger bailout for East Asia. If they hadn't, the world economy might well have tanked, bringing the Clinton administration down with it.

Indeed, from welfare reform to Kosovo to trade, it is striking how few of the Clinton administration's successes flowed from its original agenda. With their competing paradigms and abstract theories, the Clintonites may not have been good at managing an agenda, but they did what symbolic analysts do best: respond creatively to unforeseen problems.

**T**HE QUESTION FOR W's administration, by contrast, is whether its organization men can respond to chaos or whether they will try to pretend it doesn't exist. Already, the Bushies seem loath even to discuss the mounting energy crisis in California—a crisis that could have a greater short-term impact on the economy than W's tax cuts. And when the Bushies do discuss the crisis, they speak in ideological platitudes, showing virtually no interest in the ways California's failed free-market experiment might prompt a reexamination of conservative assumptions about deregulation. Likewise, on campaign finance reform, the Bushies seem obsessed with the idea that it will distract attention from their agenda, rather than accepting that it will inevitably help define their first year in office and coming up with a creative response that goes beyond GOP dogma.

If he is to succeed as president, Bush is going to have to learn how to do in Washington what he never had to in Austin: throw out the script and improvise. And when he does, he's going to realize that he's surrounded himself with people largely unable to do so. And then, much as he may loathe them, he will be forced to turn to the experts and intellectuals he has kept out of his inner circle. Bush has instigated a highly successful backlash against the meritocrats who many assumed would forever define the new American elite. But the backlash against the backlash may be just around the corner. ■

# Stanley Kauffmann on Films Histories, Past and Present

**H**ISTORY IS WRITTEN by the victors, we're told. Yes, the first time around, but even then only by some of the victors. *Terrorists in Retirement* (Zek) is a considerable case in point.

Mosco Boucault's documentary revises some accepted ideas about the French Resistance during the German Occupation. The film was made in 1984 and ran into censorship trouble, plus opposition from some former Resistance fighters and from the French Communist party. One prevailing belief about World War II has been that the French Communists, whose courage and sacrifice are certainly still awesome, were prime in the Resistance movement. Boucault tells the story of a smaller group of heroes who were not "Breton French," as one phrase in the film has it, and whose part in the struggle became a sort of embarrassment. Some of their non-Breton names were Mitzflicker, Weissberg, and Kojitski. Members of this contingent were mostly Polish and Romanian Jews, who had arrived in France during the 1930s and who quickly volunteered for the Resistance. Also in this group were Italian non-Jews and others, but the Jews, most of whom were Communists, were predominant.

According to this film, it would have been displeasing to De Gaulle's postwar France to acknowledge a patriotic debt to the Mitzflickers of the underground, so in 1943 and 1944, as victory became more and more predictable, members of this émigré Resistance contingent were sent on especially dangerous missions. Boucault even offers allegations that the French Communists made it possible for the Germans to capture a few of these émigrés in 1943. Some of these foreign-born fighters survived. Thirty-five years later, Boucault interviewed them on film and braided the results with newsreel shots of the past. When the film was ready, he ran into difficulties with people who wanted the record unaltered. (The delaying power of the opposition is underscored by a sim-

ple fact. One of the two voice-over narrators was Simone Signoret, who died in 1985.) Eventually *Terrorists in Retirement* was shown on French television. It has only lately received its American premiere (at the Film Forum in New York). It follows the stories of seven survivors, all Jews, five Polish-born and two Romanian. There is no word as to how many of these seven are still with us, but in the early 1980s they were following their trades in Paris, mostly different kinds of tailoring, answering questions to the camera as they worked. Their responses are notable for at least three reasons. One, there is no self-pity. Two, all of them broke with Communism after the war. Three, each of them said he would kill again if such an occasion arose—particularly as they remember the completeness with which their families, in Poland and Romania, were wiped out.

An unexpected touch of humor comes from a dispute between one ex-partisan and the widow of another about responsibility for a certain mission. Very much on the other hand, a peculiar pathos comes from reenactments. In a few sequences these now-enfeebled men show us, on the exact spot, how they carried out some of their bombings and how they executed a German officer in the Metro. One man shows us how he made bombs—an essential ingredient is blipped on the sound track—as if he were baking a cake. These sequences have no hint of nostalgia in them: these old-timers seem to reenact these missions as a tribute to their comrades who did not survive. Boucault presents statistics about the damage that this émigré contingent caused the occupiers and the French collaborators. How vital this group's struggle was to victory can be argued; how vital it was to them is inarguable.

The last shot is a summary. The final interview is of a quiet, well-spoken man, sitting at his work table, sewing away, composed. Then he is asked about his family. As he remembers, his voice alters. He puts down his needle and covers his

face with his hands. The frame freezes. Over this shot, the hands covering the face, the film credits roll.

Change is happening in another history—less than minuscule compared to the above but still a tick in the chronicle of culture. The British crime film is changing. Until recently, British crime pictures, for all their local accents and lingo, were almost always blatant facsimiles of the American genre. Not the suspense thriller, which was formed to perfection in Britain by the early Hitchcock, but the gangster flick and its brethren. In structure and timbre of threat, British gang films kept trying to repeat what the Cagney-Robinson-Bogart-Raft pictures had established as classic instances. Patronizing though this may sound, there was always something pathetic to an American viewer about those British gang pictures. Mike Figgis's *Stormy Monday* (1988) is a key instance. A tussle between crime figures for control of Newcastle, after New York and Chicago and America's nationwide criminal imperialism, seemed like those ranches somewhere in the English countryside to which Londoners could go and pretend they were in Westerns. Even so recent a number as Mike Hodges's *Croupier* (1998) was a paint-by-numbers imitation of 1930s Hollywood.

Guy Ritchie is changing that subversive condition. He is, in a chuckling paradox, making British crime films look bigger by making them smaller, by making them completely native in mode and reference. Ritchie's films scoff at American shadow: they are brisk ultra-cockney romps about robbery and violence—Hogarth on speed. Unlike many American gang pictures, Ritchie's films do not imply anything huge about national morality. He concentrates on a bunch of quasi-humorous weasels scurrying feverishly about the dirty job in hand. A few years ago Ritchie made *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, a London crime comedy that was like a mod *Beggar's Opera* rendered in splashes of music video. (Music video is in fact Ritchie's background.) The film paid no attention to Hollywood models in any way. It was completely and enjoyably itself, utterly East End.

Now Ritchie has made *Snatch* (Screen Gems) which is, if anything, an even deeper dive into local talk and jokes, local hates and jealousies. I can't claim that I understood all the dialogue, but I certainly understood the story and the characters; and in a contrary way, enjoyment was heightened by Ritchie's disregard of me. As in *Lock, Stock*, he was making a pro-

vincial film without universalist regard for those who might not understand it. Again he relied on the intensity of his invention to compensate for parochial dialect.

He was right. The cinematic dazzle, the high pitch to which he leads his actors, the relish of sheer velocity are reward enough. The plot also helps, though it's not crucial. It's about the theft of a diamond the size of a golf ball by a gang of cockney crooks who have a New York affiliate and how they all get involved with, among others, some gypsies in a London gypsy camp—involved, too, with a dog—in a struggle to market the diamond. No surprise: sex is also an ingredient.

Surprise, however, comes from two of the cast. Benicio Del Toro, the chief Mexican detective in *Traffic*, is one of the crooks here. And American superstar Brad Pitt plays a supporting role in this

small British picture—a gypsy who is also a boxer. Pitt clearly wants to keep out of the sex-pot stereotype for which he first seemed headed: *Seven Years in Tibet* and *Meet Joe Black* and *Fight Club* revealed his urge for variety, for versatility. In *Snatch*, rigged out in the right gear and accent, he carries on his career in—at the least—an idiosyncratic way.

The major roles are played by Ritchie familiars, Jason Flemyng and Vinnie Jones, who are two of the gang leaders. Rade Sherbedgia is a mysterious continental menace, and Dennis Farina is the New York connection (who can't wait to get out of London and back home—where there is craziness that he understands). All of them and others, too, have caught the Ritchie tone of fast, irreverent satire. *Snatch* is like a fireworks display. Sense is not what we expect it to make. ■

Austen: her sense of values derived from traditional society. When she observes transition to a society more or less inner-directed, she observes it in terms of a traditional (other-directed) one.

Snobbishness and vulgarity are other-directed characteristics she sees as bad.

Dickens: Aware of devolving of character from some ideal he has in mind. That ideal is a traditional society. A quasi-traditional one, however, not based on land, but on a "past" believed to have been good.

Pickwick: dress, innocence, whole look, are of a past time. Transportation via stagecoach, for instance. In 1837 [when *The Pickwick Papers* appeared], there were already railroads in England. There was now a romance attached to stagecoaches. Dickens depicted the romance of not much more than ten years before. The world of inns, lonely roads at night, stagecoaches.

Same thing happens in Trollope: the nice people are very traditional.

Dickens later mocks this kind of character. Shows he is a fraud. Completely different notion of a social actuality. Dickens later begins to conceive what Riesman calls the autonomous personality. A person truly free.

Everybody has this "myth" of the recent past. Note people's nostalgia for the 1920s now, for instance. See Robert Warshaw's article in *Partisan Review* on the Western hero; a West that never existed. We created a cultural-historical myth here.

THE SOCIETY WITH which Dickens begins is that of an idyllic state of the recent past. He does not have a really large historic range; he has strong feeling for the present. He does, however, go back to late-eighteenth-century image.

Pickwick is an eighteenth-century character. He is the virtuous merchant; philanthropic, benevolent, simple humanitarian. We might surmise Dickens had in mind the late-eighteenth-century image of book illustrations: *The Vicar of Wakefield*, for instance. Dickens was a novelist working closely with his illustrator (or illustrators—he had Seymour, a suicide, Cruickshank, and Phiz).

At twenty-five he was commissioned by the *Letter Press* to write a sports novel. The idea of Cockneys going to country to shoot and having mishaps, riding horses and getting thrown, casting fishing lines and getting them caught in lapels, etc. This commission was specifically to be a story featuring Seymour's illustrations. He was to write the story so that Seymour could illustrate it, primarily.

Thus Dickens had to think in graphic

## In Professor Trilling's class. Reality, Unreality, and the Novel

In the fall of 1954, Lionel Trilling gave a graduate course on Jane Austen and Charles Dickens at Columbia University. What follows are excerpts from the notes of two of his lectures on Dickens, as they were transcribed by Bea Bodenstien, a student in the course.

HOW ARE AUSTEN and Dickens alike? In pre-eminence. They are the two greatest novelists in English.

Were not, however, always considered so. Fifty years ago this statement would have been laughed at. It was then clear that Dickens was anything but great. Meredith (at that time considered the greatest English novelist) said that not much of Dickens's work would live because it has so little correspondence with real life.

Henry James, at twenty-one, reviewing *Our Mutual Friend* for *The Nation*, made out a case against Dickens. Said people not like this; characters not life-like. Remember that Henry James was then undertaking to be Henry James; you couldn't be Henry James and not do something against Dickens.

About twenty years ago taste began

to change, and there was beginning a re-evaluation of Dickens. Chesterton was writing then to a hostile world in which it was axiomatic that Dickens was not a good novelist.

[Austen and Dickens were also] alike in that they both investigated a transition in society.

But this is a meaningless statement because every novelist is dealing with a transitional society. A movement from one set of values to another set. Society is transition.

A novelist has his childhood on tap. Remembers what things were like. Uses this as a means of judging the present. Always contrasting it to what now exists. Always has a historical little Golden Age to which he can refer.

Here I might mention again David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. He gives types in certain kinds of society. The Inner-directed and the Other-directed.

1. A traditional society is one in which rules are laid down for your conduct: etiquette, law, custom. Other-directed.

2. Inner-directed society: emphasis still on family. The kind of highly-principled character who was rife in the nineteenth century. Dominates society. Has something within that he must impose.

terms, visualize. He had, from the beginning, to think in terms of illustrations. In fact, Dickens's illustrations are now part of our iconography. It would seem a great drawback to read a Dickens novel not illustrated.

This habit of thinking in terms of illustrations already makes Pickwick an eighteenth-century man. Retired, devoting self to benevolence.

Was Dickens a Christian writer? This is an annoying thing to say, of course. I realize how impatient we all get with critics like C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and Dorothy Sayers, who come out with articles and books proving "so-and-so was really, a *Christian* writer." This has been carried so far as to include people like Baudelaire, Black Mass and all. But it *is* true that our culture has been Christian for quite a long time.

Pickwick's is a Christian culture, no matter how ritual is or is not observed, how doctrine is dealt with. The concepts in force are Christian. This is very true of the nineteenth century in general. Despite what the textbooks say, men thought in these categories. In Jane Austen's last novel you can certainly see the working out of a few Christian ideas.

Pickwick is *almost* consciously intended as a Christian character. There is, right through Dickens, a clear, strange, increasingly conscious, Christian literalness. An interest in the lame, the halt, the blind, the idiotic. Suffer the children to come; be like them to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This is a very profound notion of Dickens. These characters (the lame, etc.) are very impressive. They have the impressiveness of those strange people in Blake, a comparison we shall return to later.

By the time of *Little Dorrit* you get a very open Christian novel. He was conceiving the world in terms of these Christian concepts. Not doctrine, but *concept*. Especially when Dickens gets mawkish. Here the reader must be aware of what Dickens is up to.

**L**AST TIME WE were comparing Jane Austen and Dickens. One other point of comparison is their relation to their respective literary traditions. Austen begins, you remember, by writing burlesques (thus did Cervantes and Fielding). Dickens not only begins this way, but keeps it up all the time.

A great deal of Dickens's language makes reference to literature. His style is literary burlesque.

His characters are all talking, always. Enormously, literately; they all make reference to some literary tradition. They could not name that tradition, to be sure, but they are always aware of it. They

exemplify it, most elaborately.

This brings upon Dickens's head a charge of unreality. People, critics said, are not really like this. On the other hand, those who were wont to criticize Dickens on this count went around saying (when they were willing) "Barkis is willin'," thinking it appropriate. Why if these characters are not real, are they so alive? Why are references to them so ready on our lips? Thackeray's characters were considered really real, yet do we give his characters the honor and status of bywords? No. Must we must say, then, that Dickens's characters are not real, but they are alive; and Thackeray's characters are real, but they are not alive?

People answer this by saying: Dickens's characters are "types." God help the world if this is so! Is the world really full of Micawbers, Barkis's, Scrooges? No, of course not. The solution is that they are *caricatures*. Burlesques. They are not types but exaggerations. Cf. Santayana's remark that until he visited England he did not really believe Dickens's characters were real.

All Dickens's characters know they are characters. They know what they are supposed to do. Micawber, for instance, knows what is expected of him. He always gets his language right.

(Cf. Faulkner: the criticism has been made that all his characters, no matter how illiterate they actually are, talk elaborately, literately. Faulkner's answer to this was that no one is illiterate to himself. A person who never got beyond the third grade could still understand experience and emotions within his own mind. The novelist must make this articulate.)

In the same way, Dickens's characters are always articulate. They represent themselves in a society where it is expected of them to do so. This is not true in America. We are expected to be clear, without eccentricities.

Dickens's characters, for instance, always enunciate their principles: "I always say...." "It is my habit to ...." "This is my custom...." "...the way I do things."

**L**ET US DISCUSS the thickness of Dickens's own reference. He had very little schooling. What he had was not particularly good. At an early age he was placed in a blacking factory. He never forgot this. But still we find him at an early age aware of the structure of an English sentence. He was as literary as could be. He was using language with a sense of its possibilities. (Which are quite extreme. Carlyle, for instance.)

He had a love of language for itself. He had reference, rhetoric. All of which he expects to be caught up on. Compare, for instance, Mark Twain's literary refer-

ence; he was always referring to the literary tradition, though he had a poor education. See the scene in *Tom Sawyer* where Tom, struck with love of Becky Thatcher, recites, turns lakes into mountains and rivers into lakes. "And chaos was come again." Twain expected people to catch this reverberation of *Othello*: "But I do love thee! and when I love thee not, Chaos is come again."

Where did Dickens absorb the whole world of English prose? It was part of the culture in a way we cannot now feel it. It had a kind of delight for people that it does not now have.

Example: Sgt. Buzzfuzz's speech, peroration at trial of Bardell v. Pickwick. Dickens was only twenty-five, remember. This flow never stops. (Even here we have an echo of *Othello*, with "...occupation gone." (*Othello* III, iii: "Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!")

With this use of language, we must be aware of what the language is used *for*. Here, where everything is too much. Redundancy, elaborate repetition.

Things themselves: Dickens comments at such length about objects. The object absorbs his poetizing. As he develops, eventually he begins to deal with people as though they were objects, and with things as if they were animated.

This leads Andrew Lang to speak of something primitive in Dickens. An animism. The life in objects. Knocker, stairs, house, wind, fog, all have impulses of their own.

This is partly the result of his language. He cannot look at an object without having something to say about it. Dickens's world is an animistic world where things will do more than we ordinarily expect them to do.

The poverty, filth, degradation, amid which Dickens spent much of his childhood was so extreme that if Dickens had really uttered what he had seen and heard, no one would have published him or read him. He himself says this again and again. We have no idea of the ways the poor lived in those days, the hygienic conditions, the hunger, the prostitution (even among children); the language spoken even by working children was too horrible for him to reproduce in his novels.

All the same, in what he does say he is telling us "This is real." And he wants to *make* it real, to have objects come alive.

**P**ICKWICK PAPERS is a phenomenon. It had an incredible success. One might almost say that there has never been a literary success equal to it. When Sam Weller appeared, sales shot up sharply. From then on it gained success with incredible speed. The whole world was changed by Pickwick, the whole world

was aware of it. And, just as now everything is "atomic," everything began to be called "Pickwick" or "Pickwickian." Cigars, inns, etc. Never again did Dickens achieve this kind of literary success.

What is it about this book that gives one a particular feeling for it? It is not, by any standard, a good novel. The form is the simplest imaginable. It is a novel of the road: linear construction. A form which is not form. It is merely a series of travels. (*Huckleberry Finn*, the *Odyssey*.)

How could a serious person, I mean a really serious person, respond to this book? Is it the myth? The myth of an absurd, unreal person whose adventures are not much more than vulgar jokes. Why is it interesting and attractive? Hauser (*Social History of Art*) refers to Dickens's "beautiful and profound daydreams."

We should ask: How does Pickwick deal with reality, not how does he represent reality? In this respect Pickwick is a superman. He is the representative of benevolence and true virtue. Dickens tries this kind of character again in the Cheerybles and in John Jarndyce, but never so successful as with Pickwick. Finally Dickens himself can't stand it, and mocks it in *Little Dorrit*.

The character of Pickwick has extravagance, plus:

1. *Comedy*: he is a comic representation of benevolence. He is always funny, always in funny situations (that creak). For instance, being put in dog pound after having been found asleep in a field after heavy eating and drinking. In a hotel he gets into the wrong room. He is shut outdoors on a windy night in his nightgown. This is the kind of basis on which the book is built. What wit, what subtlety! And Pickwick always gets caught in these situations. But this kind of situation takes a serious form: he is caught again, but this time is put in the Fleet. Without this debacle the book would not perhaps be so great.

(Cf. Worthington's book on the Don Juan legend. She says the tendency to show good men as ridiculous is characteristic of modern literature: Don Quixote, for instance, and Bloom. This is the de-

cline of the authority of Christianity, the degeneration of the hero. Bloom, for instance, has *caritas*, yet he is shown throughout as a socially contemptible and ridiculous figure.)

2. *Innocence*: Extravagant. Pickwick is completely and entirely, in every possible sense of the word, innocent. He has no thought of guile. This could only be done in the light of the comic. The man has nothing to gain. We must remember Pickwick as innocent, yet at the same time setting himself against the law, against "justice." This is terribly important. Without the Fleet, the image of law, society in

sweep, for instance: fantastic little creature, all black, carrying tall broom, creeping from house to house, the soot ground into his skin. Can such a thing as this exist? Wander around, seen by everyone? The harlot's cry, England's winding sheet. Forceful, extravagant images.

Both Blake and Dickens measure society by this kind of thing: child, law, prison-house. These are the "great" images of society for Dickens. Here society expresses its madness, eccentricity, non-realism. And if you look at contemporary pictures of nineteenth-century London, you will see that it was an Inferno.

4. *"Competency."* This was Pickwick's nice, comfy nineteenth-century basis. He had no need to seek gain. And his little "scholarly" pursuits reinforce his innocence.

5. *Asexuality*. At a discount. This is probably the most un-sexual book in English literature.

It is also anti-feminine, dominated by men. Haunted by women. The Pickwick Club is a kind of bachelor's lodge; totally male; all escaping from women.

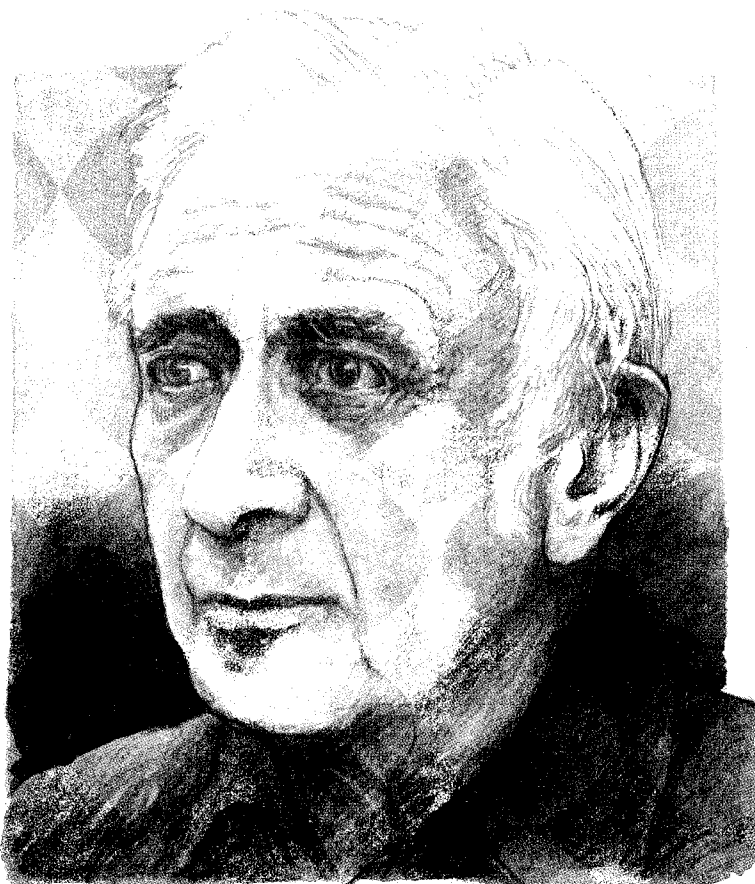
There are no villainous men in the book. We love all the men. But the women—as men we are in danger. We have a comedy of humors here, though the humors themselves are rather shabby: the (erotic) romantic humour (Tupman); the humor of venerly/sports, the humor of the poet.

Pickwick is not, as we should say today, "sexually oriented." The little affair of Sam Weller and Mary is mere flummery.

Sam's real life is with Mr. Pickwick. We know that this is the real center of his life. Sam cannot exist apart from Mr. Pickwick.

I said there were no villainous men in the book. The villain is the law. The law partners are villainous only in that they are part of the law. Jingle is not personally villainous. He takes a kind of pleasure in his badness, but he is not bitter; he is finally honest, reclaimable.

Women are the enemy. They are ready with the trap-for-marriage. Mrs. Weller, Mrs. Bardell. (Meredith said you get the free play of the Comic Spirit only when women are equal and honored among men. The feminine principle, he thought,



Lionel Trilling by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

its worst aspect, we would have no book, as we know the book.

If such a man is unreal (innocence, virtue), is he any more unreal than society and law in 1837? Was society any less a denial of realism than Pickwick himself?

Dickens was always involved with the madness, the insanity, the unreality of the law in relation to society. This haunts him throughout his work.

Is Pickwick grotesque and the law not grotesque?

There is here an impulse very much like that of Blake. Innocence and experience, children, strange images. Much like the way life is if you look with Blake's eyes at the nature of society. His chimney

was necessary to the Comic Spirit. But Meredith's was a rather particular kind of Comic Spirit. He describes it as the "slim feasting smile." This suggests, rather than comedy, a graveworm at work.)

The pleasures, therefore, are not those of eroticism, though this is a peculiarly sensory book.

Innocence: Sam Weller. Though he grew up in the streets and slums, and is the personification, the essence, of Cock-

ney knowingness, he is strangely innocent. His little lust behind the door with Mary does not ring true.

The book, then, is all a picture of innocence up against evil. Evil not in human nature but in society. A combination of the non-real plus reality. This creates a terrific fantasy. It will be the essence of Dickens's appeal throughout his books. Keep this in mind as a principle of creation in Dickens. ■

rates up or down. It does this by selling or buying Treasury bills, ninety-one-day obligations of the United States government, and thus affecting their price or yield. In the course of doing so, it also subtracts from and adds to the reserves of commercial banks, with some influence on their willingness to lend.

But merely controlling short-term interest rates would not seem to give the Fed much leverage over economic events. Major business decisions, especially capital investment, depend more on long-term interest rates and the cost of equity capital. Fortunately, variations in short-term rates have some influence on the bond and mortgage markets. You can see why this might be so. Suppose the rate on a one-year loan today were 5 percent and the rate on a one-year loan starting a year from now were confidently expected to rise to 6 percent. Then the annual interest rate on a two-year loan today would have to be (approximately) 5.5 percent (with a little leeway for transactions costs). No borrower would pay more, because then two successive one-year loans would be preferable; and no lender would accept less, for exactly the same reason. So if the Fed nudges short rates up a bit, this impulse is likely to be transmitted to longer-term bonds. If today's move is expected—rightly or wrongly—to be the first of a series in the same direction, the impulse will be that much stronger.

Still, there is no lockstep here. Since we (and the Fed) are really concerned about the rate on ten-year or twenty-year or even longer bonds, there is plenty of room for other influences on long rates. The market may have definite or confused expectations about inflation in the next twenty years, or about the course of the business cycle, or about possible events in Europe or Asia, or about future monetary policy, all of which would affect future short rates, and therefore the current long rate. So there is a lot of uncertainty that factors into the Fed's decisions, and even more that surrounds the likely consequences of those decisions.

AND YET MOVING short-term interest rates is the Fed's single policy instrument. Now it is a well-understood proposition in the theory of economic policy that control of one instrument confers at best the capacity to meet one goal. This is very elementary, but it is not easy to explain. Here is a loose analogy. Imagine an artillery piece located at point A and trying to hit a target at point B. Hitting the target means getting the shell to explode at the right distance from A and in the right compass direction: there are thus two goals to be met. Correspondingly, the artilleryman needs

# Giving Credit

By ROBERT M. SOLOW

Maestro:

Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom  
by Bob Woodward

(Simon and Schuster, 270 pp., \$25)

Greenspan:  
The Man Behind Money  
by Justin Martin

(Perseus, 284 pp., \$28)

**B**OB WOODWARD GIVES US monetary policy reduced to the level of soap opera. We listen to the exact words of long-ago private conversations between Important People, and we hear the interior monologues of the participants. How do we get to know these things? Woodward tells us that he has gleaned them from repeated interviews with knowledgeable informants, who are nameless. So there are two reasons to be suspicious. The first is that Woodward himself is free to select and arrange whatever he has heard, to suit his own story line; the second is that his informants can elide and supplement and embellish what they tell him to make themselves and their preferred narratives look good.

This kind of insider gossip is, if anything, the enemy of understanding. It is the opiate of the few. (To give credit where credit is due, Woodward has made good use of the published minutes of Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meetings, where monetary policy is made by the Fed's Board of Governors and the

presidents of the regional Federal Reserve Banks.) Alan Greenspan emerges from Woodward's book as Master of the Universe, God on a good day (in Alan Krueger's words), a man whose stomachaches provide more insight into the economy than a lifetime of anyone else's research. The book itself is not worth talking about, but Greenspan certainly is.

What is the Federal Reserve's besetting problem, and how has the Greenspan Fed dealt with it to earn him the massive respect, even awe, that is reflected everywhere? I had better put my own bias on the table. A year or two ago someone circulated a letter to scholars interested in monetary policy, asking them to rank the Federal Reserve chairmen of the past eighty years or so. My response was to pair Alan Greenspan and Paul Volcker at the top of my list for skill and understanding. I think that Greenspan and his colleagues have done a superb job of central banking at a crucial time, and deserve a lot of credit for it, though they do not quite deserve deification.

How have they done better than others might have done, or than central bankers elsewhere actually did? The Federal Reserve has one instrument at its disposal, one knob it can turn, to help steer the economy. It can nudge short-term interest

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two aiming instruments, one to control the direction in which the barrel is aimed, and one to control its elevation and thus the distance that the shell travels. If there is only a direction control but elevation is fixed, then the artillery man can aim at any point on a fixed circle centered at A, and B is very unlikely to be on that circle. A hit would be dumb luck. If there is only an elevation control, but the gun can point in only one direction, then the artillery man can aim at any point on a fixed line emanating from A, and B is very unlikely to be on that line. But give him both controls and he can at least aim directly at B. How close he comes to the target depends on the gun's intrinsic accuracy, the characteristics of the shell that is fired, and perhaps other things. (Perhaps it is worth pushing the analogy a little further: normally the artilleryman will take aim, fire a round, observe where it lands, and try to make incremental adjustments. Monetary policy works the same way.)

Anyhow, with its one instrument the Fed can hope, at least in principle, to manage one characteristic of the evolving economy. The tradition of central banking has it that its single goal is the achievement of a stable price level or, more generally, the control of inflation. If that were really all there is to it, then central banking would not be as hard as it actually is. But even then it would not be altogether easy, because the instrument offers only imperfect control, and with a lag. So the central bank has to make those successive incremental adjustments, and the target is in the future and moving. To use a different analogy, monetary policy is like driving a car along a winding road, when the car responds to the steering wheel with a lag that can range from 10 seconds to a minute or so.

In actual fact, however, everyone looks to the central bank to do more than check inflation. Other possible goals include the level of aggregate economic activity (usually measured by the unemployment rate), the proportions in which current output is divided between future-oriented investment and present-oriented consumption,

and the current account in the balance of payments (the net amount of foreign borrowing or lending). One possible response from the central bank is: look, we can only do one thing, and our thing is checking inflation; and if you have other worries, find other instruments. Central banks are often set up with considerable independence from political pressures just so they can take that apparently high-and-mighty position.

But once again, things may not be so simple. The overriding goal, after all, has to be the health of the national economy. Emergencies may arise when it would be

will weaken. Those sectors will find it harder to raise prices in the face of higher interest costs; they may be forced to cut back production and even reduce work hours or lay off workers. So there may be adverse pressure on wages as well. Lower profits and wage incomes will help spread the weakness of demand to other sectors.

Higher interest rates will also attract some short-term capital from abroad; the foreign-currency value of the dollar will be higher than it would otherwise have been. (I put it in this convoluted way because many other forces are at work in the foreign exchange market, including the dimly-seen inflationary threat that started it all off.) A higher dollar has a direct downward effect on the domestic price level; the dollar price of imported goods will be lower, at least initially. Sharpened competition from imports will keep domestic producers from raising prices. Some loss of export markets will further weaken the position of domestic producers and workers. This can only help in the Fed's campaign against the anticipated threat of price and wage inflation.

Believe it or not, almost every sentence that I have written could be festooned with still further ramifications, still more ifs and buts. But the main point should be clear. Here is the Fed using its one instrument to achieve its one goal: one bowling ball aimed, accurately, at one pin. But each of the other legitimate goals of public policy will have been affected along the

way. Output and employment may fall. The current-account balance will be influenced in hard-to-predict ways. Higher interest rates will probably shift the composition of GDP away from investment and toward consumption. Some industries will be hurt more than others; and since industries are not evenly scattered over the country, some regions will feel the effects of tighter money more than others. That is why Alfred E. Newman would make a bad central banker. It is also why Alan Greenspan makes a good one. There are many interconnected things to think about.

So how do central bankers cope? Some



Alan Greenspan by Rob Babboni for The New Republic

wise to allow some temporary departure from the central bank's traditional single-mindedness about the price level. And the complexity goes considerably deeper. Monetary policy cannot make surgical strikes on inflation without having big side-effects. Suppose that the Fed foresees an inflationary threat and does its thing, and short-term interest rates rise. How does this fend off the inflationary threat? Credit will become harder to get and more expensive, initially perhaps through the bank-lending channel and later through the bond market and elsewhere. Credit-sensitive demands (such as capital equipment, housing, large consumer durables)

take the hard Tom Lehrer-Werner von Braun line: Ve put rockets up, who knows where dey come down? Dot's not my department.... Others adopt a convenient, if somewhat dubious and Panglossian, theory that goes like this: provided inflation is kept very low and pretty steady, the national economy is an efficient self-equilibrating machine. There may be some transient fallout—the odd recession, a little unemployment, an interval of slow growth—but pretty soon the economy will bounce back and achieve just about the best state that it is capable of maintaining, given its resources and its institutions. In any case, things will be better on average than they would be if the central bank were ever distracted from its primary target of controlling inflation.

Along with this theory there usually comes a practical instruction sheet. It says that the “best state” of the economy can be usefully summarized by a particular value of the unemployment rate. This special value is sometimes called the “natural” rate of unemployment, and sometimes (God help us) the NAIRU, for “non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment.” As that last locution suggests, the NAIRU is supposed to have the following property: if the unemployment rate is kept for any length of time below the NAIRU, inflation will speed up without limit; if the

unemployment rate is kept for any length of time above the NAIRU, inflation will diminish without limit, eventually turning into faster and faster deflation. The only unemployment rate compatible with steady inflation is the NAIRU itself, and it is compatible with any rate of inflation. So, for instance, if current inflation is uncomfortably fast, the only recourse for monetary policy is to stage an episode during which the unemployment rate stays higher than the NAIRU; and when inflation has fallen to a tolerable rate, the amount of unemployment can be allowed to fall to the NAIRU, but no lower.

A more sophisticated instruction sheet is given by the so-called “Taylor rule,” named for John Taylor of Stanford. According to this formula, the central bank must first decide on two numbers: the NAIRU itself (or the level of GDP that currently corresponds to it) and a target inflation rate (if zero is unattainable). The Taylor rule then compares these with the current state of affairs and calculates how big a change in the short-term interest rate the central bank should engineer in the current quarter. If current inflation exceeds the target, the rule will instruct the central bank to raise the interest rate; if current unemployment exceeds the NAIRU, the rule will call for a lower interest rate. If both conditions prevail, the rule weighs one against the other and gives an answer.

The Taylor rule has two advantages: it takes into account deviations from the target both for inflation and unemployment and allows the central bank to respond according to some predetermined relative urgency; and it avoids sudden large changes in interest rates, unless the current situation is already extreme. Under the right circumstances, the Taylor rule gives sensible instructions. In fact, it has been found that the rule provides a good description of what central banks actually do. (Taylor would allow, by the way, that the rule should be disregarded in certain emergencies, such as a stock market meltdown.)

Even so, there are a couple of loose ends. The main one has to do with the NAIRU itself. Obviously the Taylor rule, and indeed the whole theory on which it is based, depends on the presumption that the NAIRU is a fairly stable characteristic of the economy—a number that can be looked for and found, and will not disappear erratically just when you need it. I have to say that I have never found either the underlying theory or the supporting statistical work to be plausible or convincing. For one thing, it is really hard to credit one half of the story that predicts faster and faster deflation if the unemployment rate stays ever so slightly above the NAIRU.

But if you give up on that, the NAIRU itself becomes very fuzzy. I also have to say that mine was a minority view, to put it kindly. In fairness, the theory worked quite well in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, but neither before nor after. It has never worked very well in Europe, in my view.

**T**HIS BRINGS US back to Alan Greenspan. He was nominated by Ronald Reagan to succeed Paul Volcker as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board in June 1987, and took office early in August. Only two months later the stock market took a terrible bath, including a one-day loss of 22.6 percent on October 19. The danger here was that the financial mechanism would seize up: fundamentally sound debtors might be forced into bankruptcy because they could not find the liquidity with which to meet obligations, and their inability to pay might force others into the same failure, with a chain reaction to follow.

The Fed, led by Greenspan and Gerald Corrigan, then the president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, met this potential crisis brilliantly. They did what central bankers have known they should do since Walter Bagehot's *Lombard Street*, a sort of Boy Scout handbook for central bankers, was published in 1873. They let banks and other financial institutions know that the Fed, as the “lender of last resort,” would provide an essentially bottomless pool of liquidity on reasonable terms. The point was not to bail out unwise debtors and creditors, but to preserve fundamentally solvent ones who might otherwise have gone down the tubes because the system itself has ceased to function. The operation was a success. Best of all, the stock-market collapse left essentially no trace on the “real” economy of production and employment.

That was one high point of the Greenspan Fed. Its record during the Bush administration was average at best. It did not fend off the 1990 recession that probably lost the 1992 election for Bush, and it may have helped bring the recession on by pursuing the conventional, single-minded preoccupation with the threat of faster inflation. When the policy reversal came, it was too little, too late. The Fed's performance was not helped by the fact that the Bush people, like the Reagan people before them, kept mindlessly asking for lower interest rates, in season and out of season. Greenspan undoubtedly felt obliged to resist, even when there might have been a glimmer of a case to the contrary, in order to preserve the Fed's ability to act independently.

It is worth mentioning that Volcker had for years been offering, in language as

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clear as the rabbinical tradition allowed, to trade lower interest rates for an end to chronic budget deficits. For all those years, the Reagan and Bush administrations had declined the offer. As a result, the American economy was trapped in a regime of easy fiscal policy and tight monetary policy. Just the opposite would have been better, in the sense that it would have encouraged more investment and less consumption at the same general level of economic activity. On taking office in 1993, the Clinton administration bought into that bargain and thus freed the Fed to pursue a more flexible policy on interest rates. The stage was set for Greenspan's finest hour, and it lasted a lot longer than an hour.

AT THE BEGINNING of the 1990s, the weight of expert opinion placed the NAIRU somewhere between 6 and 7 percent. In other words, anything that brought unemployment down to 6 percent of the labor force would cause inflation to pick up speed, and keep accelerating until unemployment rose again. Given the inevitable lag, you could make a case for acting even earlier. Indeed, as early as February 1994, only a couple of years into a very slow recovery, Greenspan began a yearlong "preemptive strike" against an inflationary threat that no one could actually see.

Fortunately, the slow upswing survived the treatment. We will never know what would have happened without that episode of gently rising interest rates. What we do know is that the economy kept improving, slowly. Inflation stayed low, aggregate output rose, and the unemployment rate kept falling. In fact it hit six percent, on the way down, in the middle of 1994. Then and there a doctrinaire central banker would have hit the brakes, probably without a second thought. To Greenspan's everlasting credit, he did not. He and his colleagues—some of whom were more taken with the conventional view—had the wit, the sense, the intuition, and the courage to look around, inspect the data, hold a damp finger up to the wind, wait and see, and let the good times roll until there were at least signs of trouble.

It turned out that the NAIRU—if there really is such a thing—was not 6 percent, nor at 5.5 percent, at least not then. In fact the American economy has had unemployment hovering around four percent of the labor force for two years, and only now do we see any signs of faster inflation. (Rising oil prices don't count in this kind of reckoning; they are imposed from outside, not by an internal inflationary process.) There is a lot of professional debate about the reasons for this run of

luck. Is it that the NAIRU just unstable, and the dice just good to us? Has the NAIRU been temporarily low for identifiable reasons, so that we can guess when it will go back to normal? Has there been some deep, possibly permanent, change in the way our economy works, so that the old rules of thumb are gone?

It will be a while before the dust settles and research can sort out the answers. For the Greenspan saga, it really doesn't matter so much. The United States has enjoyed five or six enviably prosperous years. It has provided jobs and produced goods and services that would have been irretrievably wasted if the Fed had clamped down in 1995. If, in some *X-Files*-like episode, the minds of the German Bundesbank had infiltrated the bodies of the FOMC, our prosperity would have ended in 1995 in order to beat down an inflation that has not yet come.

Fortunately the minds of the Bundesbank stayed home and depressed the European economy. It was conservative, stodgy Alan Greenspan who had the imagination to play it as it lays, to experiment a little, to try for more—and, sure enough, monetary policy turned up roses. It would have been all too easy to give in to the routine view. No respectable body of opinion would have kicked and screamed. If the good years after 1995 had not actually happened, no one would know that they had been there for the taking.

The two-point difference between 6 percent and 4 percent unemployment in the United States amounts roughly to 2.8 million jobs. It is trickier to convert that additional employment into additional GDP, but a number like \$200 billion to \$300 billion per year is probably defensible. So this is a big deal, and one should not begrudge Greenspan his canonization, although something more along the lines of Plutarch would be more satisfying than the *People*-magazine approach of Woodward. A substantial share of the credit has to go to the Clinton administration's decision to clean up the budget to pave the way for lower interest rates and to treat the fiscal-monetary policy mix as a serious object of policy instead of an occasion for grandstanding.

I happened to be writing this review on January 3, the day on which the Fed surprised everyone by lowering the short-term interest rate by half a point, a month or so before any such action had been expected. This is a living example of just the kind of pragmatism that has become the Greenspan hallmark. The immediate situation was not easy to read. The financial press and the Bush entourage—or are they the same thing?—eagerly adopted big-time pessimism. It is possible, maybe even likely, but far from certain that we

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#### JUDGES

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Pemberton, Roger Rosenblatt (chair),

Robert Wright

A project of the New York Foundation for the Arts

were headed for substantially worse than the slowdown that the same financial press had been seeking a few months ago.

Quite possibly the Fed's earlier series of interest-rate increases had been overdone. It is the essence of monetary policy that one cannot know; in fact, one will never know. There is no way—other than divine assistance—that the Fed can provide *exactly* the right interest-rate policy. The sensible New Year's calculation, I think, was that the fifty-basis-point rate reduction would very likely help, and could hardly hurt, and could be reversed if necessary. Good thinking. On the next day the European Central Bank decided to stand pat rather than follow the Fed down, even though there were some signs of weakness. So what else is new?

**J**USTIN MARTIN'S BIOGRAPHY is surprisingly amateurish and cliché-ridden. Still, it is a biography, carrying Greenspan from childhood to eminence, in a reasonably even-handed way. In particular, it provides some detail on a genuinely puzzling aspect of Greenspan's career. How did such a low-key, intelligent person get hooked up with the Ayn Rand cult, and with "objectivism"? I am taking it for granted that *The Fountainhead* is bad fiction and worse philosophy; but Greenspan was for many years a member of Rand's inner circle. This would be easier to understand if it had been a youthful fling, but the connection was made when Greenspan was in his late twenties. I was surprised to learn from Martin that Rand and her husband, along with Greenspan's mother, formed the party that was invited to the White House in 1974 when Greenspan, at the age of forty-eight, was sworn in as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Ford.

In his role at the Council of Economic Advisers, Greenspan was a standard, knee-jerk conservative. He said the routine things about free markets and small government, but without the edgy extremism that characterized the objectivist line. In the more than thirty years that I have known him, at meetings of the Brookings Panel on Economic Activity, at Federal Reserve functions, and elsewhere, I have never heard Greenspan say anything that would bring you up short with the thought: my God, there speaks Ayn Rand. The flexibility and the absence of dogmatism that characterized his successes at the Fed are exactly contrary to the whole tone of Rand's writings. I think we have to conclude that Greenspan's connection to the Rand group was a matter of personal choice, and none of our business.

I want to mention only one more biographical detail gleaned from Martin's book. Greenspan was a serious clarinet-

ist in his youth, and enrolled at Juilliard after graduating from George Washington High School. He dropped out after a year and toured with an undistinguished jazz band. That he admires Mozart is only natural: what clarinet player would not

admire the composer of those three masterpieces for his instrument? But Greenspan also knew Stan Getz at the time. The moral has to be that a youth who traded fours with the young Stan Getz cannot be all bad. ■

## Lifting the Veil

By CHARLES LARMORE

### Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy

by John Rawls

edited by Barbara Herman

(Harvard University Press, 416 pp., \$45)

**T**HE MIND'S RELATION to the world is often considered the fundamental problem of philosophy. The nature of thought, the basic categories of experience, the sources of knowledge: the changing opinions about these topics define for most philosophers the essential history of their enterprise. That the world is peopled not by one mind but by many minds, each with its own point of view, seems a secondary matter. Questions arising from the manyness of minds and having to do with the relation in which persons stand to one another—in other words, the questions of moral and political theory—are admitted to be important, but they play a minor role in the reigning image of what philosophy is all about. They are supposedly derivative questions, anchored in the deeper issue of mind and world.

The "linguistic turn" in the thought of the twentieth century, despite its emphasis upon the social institution of language, did not change this predilection for mind in the singular. For its theme was the way our thinking takes shape within the shared speech of our community. Perhaps philosophers tend to regard the relation between mind and world as their primary subject because of a professional conceit. They like to imagine that through them Man himself is coming to understand his place in the world.

This view underlies the canonization of Wittgenstein and Heidegger as the two giants of twentieth-century philosophy. In their different styles, they both demolished the inherited picture of the mind

as divided from a world that it can grasp only indirectly through the "ideas" that it frames of the way things are. But neither found much to say about ethics. Wittgenstein declared in a lecture on the subject that "if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world"—which probably explains why he never wrote one. Heidegger held that in our present spiritual disarray we are not ready to think about ethics, and clearly he was ill-prepared to do so himself, rallying to the Nazi movement and continuing long after 1945 to extol its "inner truth and greatness."

The striking one-sidedness of Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's genius is as good a proof as any that the mind's relation to the world does not offer the master perspective for making sense of everything else. The "many-minds" problems of moral and political philosophy are no less fundamental, and they come into focus only when considered in their own terms. In taking stock of the achievements of modern philosophy, then, we need to broaden our view and to see in ethics a domain of equal and independent significance. What names would we want to place next to Wittgenstein and Heidegger?

No thinker, I believe, has a greater right to stand alongside them than John Rawls. Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, which appeared in 1971, changed forever the landscape of moral and political philosophy. Like Wittgenstein and Heidegger, Rawls has shown a remarkable capacity for self-criticism. Like them, he has gone on to revise in significant ways the doctrines that first established his fame. *Political Liberalism*, published in 1993, recasts his liberal theory of justice in a more flexible, less doctrinaire form; it shows a greater

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appreciation for modernity's deep disagreements about the character of the human good. There is an earlier Rawls and a later Rawls, just as there is an earlier and later Wittgenstein and Heidegger.

ONE REASON RAWLS has been so central a figure is the clarity with which he has seen the real relation between ethics and the rest of philosophy. "The Independence of Moral Theory" was in fact the title of his presidential address before the American Philosophical Association in 1974. It scarcely urged that moral philosophy become yet one more subfield specializing in problems that only experts can understand. To reflect upon the basic notions of the right, the good, and moral worth, and upon their connections to human psychology, is to wrestle with the deepest question that we all confront: how should we live? But in pursuing this subject, Rawls maintained, we ought to expect little help from the latest advances in metaphysics, the theory of meaning, or epistemology. Moral philosophy has its own distinctive concerns, and the only way to do them justice is to tackle them directly.

This conviction has inspired Rawls's work as a whole, in his writings and in his many years of teaching, mostly at Harvard. No less than his own positive theories, it forms a part of his enduring legacy. Rawls has taught people to appreciate the integrity of moral thinking. At a time when ethics seemed to be the poor cousin of the rest of philosophy, riveted on the formal analysis of moral language and inclined to regard "value judgments" as little more than expressions of preference or tools of persuasion, Rawls shifted attention back to the substance of moral life. He made it once again the object of systematic argument and theory, and brought the great philosophers of the past back into the conversation of moral and political theory.

*A Theory of Justice* has a more specific focus than the whole of morality. It is a treatise in political philosophy, presenting an account of justice as "the first virtue of social institutions." The publication of the *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* is thus a major event, since here we find the conception of modern ethics as a whole, the understanding of its characteristic themes and problems, that has inspired Rawls's political thought. The book falls into five parts. Beginning with an introductory discussion of the differences between classical Greek and modern moral philosophy, it moves on to Hume, Leibniz, and Kant, who is the volume's center of gravity and Rawls's hero, and then closes with two chapters on Hegel.

These lectures have long enjoyed an underground reputation, circulating widely in unpublished form for many years; they are based on the typescripts that Rawls distributed to the students in his moral philosophy course at Harvard, and that many of them, having become philosophers themselves, have in turn passed on to their own classes. Barbara Herman, one of Rawls's former students, has now produced a definitive version for posterity. Her edition corresponds to the lectures of 1991 except for the section on Hegel, which she has had to reconstruct from notes that Rawls himself never wrote up into a hand-out for his classes. The result is an engaging history of modern ethics. But its real importance lies in the light that it sheds on Rawls's own philosophy.

The excitement that greeted *A Theory of Justice* was owed in part to Rawls's frequent use of the techniques of modern rational choice theory and welfare economics. Some readers applauded, and others bemoaned, what they saw as the attempt to turn justice into the object of something like a science. Their impression was that Rawls wanted to derive, as an economist might, a set of principles for the distribution of rights and resources, by showing that rational agents, each seeking to maximize his own advantage, would converge upon these principles

as the best bargain they could make with one another.

THIS READING COULD not have been further from the truth. For Rawls, political philosophy has its basis not in economics, but in moral theory, as these lectures make plain. *A Theory of Justice* asks us, it is true, to imagine an "Original Position" in which principles of justice are chosen by mutually disinterested and rational agents, efficiently pursuing their own interests. But this social contract is only a thought experiment, not an agreement that has been made or ever should be made; and the reason we ought to heed its terms has to do with the constraints under which it is envisioned as taking place. We are to assume, according to Rawls, that the parties are ignorant of their particular abilities, their social position, and their conception of the good, since it would not be right, but partisan and self-serving, to base one's idea of justice on such information. What they are taken not to know is what we ought to consider irrelevant.

The "veil of ignorance" imposed upon those hypothetical choosers reflects, therefore, a set of moral convictions that ought to govern our own thinking about justice. At their heart stands a commitment to what Rawls calls being "reason-

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able"—a readiness to engage with others in forms of cooperation that all, as free and equal persons, have a similar reason to endorse. Reasonableness differs from rationality, as the latter is usually understood. As rational persons, we weigh our ultimate ends and choose the most efficient means to achieve them. To be sure, we take into account what other people are likely to do, and we may give their well-being an important place in our deliberations; but in the end it is our own point of view that we are working out. Reasonableness, by contrast, requires that we reason from the perspective of others no less than from our own, since the aim is to find a way of living together that each person has reason to accept. The manyness of persons does not represent merely a fact to be acknowledged. It is the very point of departure from which we should proceed.

Rawls is not claiming, of course, that we should be reasonable instead of rational. Both forms of thinking are necessary, and the essential thing is to grasp their respective roles. Each in fact underlies one of our two basic moral powers. To frame an idea of the good or an idea of human flourishing, we must exercise rationality, fashioning and ordering our ends into a coherent vision of a life lived well. To develop a sense of justice we need to be reasonable and thereby to look for the basis of a common life that people holding different ideals of the human good can have similar grounds to accept.

The distinction between the rational and the reasonable has often been missed, most notably in modern utilitarianism. The primary aim of *A Theory of Justice* was indeed to challenge the hegemony that utilitarian thought has enjoyed in England and America since the time of Bentham and Mill. Utilitarianism holds that social institutions are properly arranged when the general happiness, the net sum of everyone's gains and losses, is as great as possible. Justice is equated with rational efficiency, so that an individual's prospects may be enhanced or diminished to any degree whatsoever, depending on what will maximize the total welfare. Society itself takes on the aspect of a person,

## Rainbow Skirt

Between bars of rain, the table looks out at the bird.

Wrapped in its own watershawl  
the house is pecked at. So the tree comes down.

Days later, limbs lopped, the thing is a cold blaze  
of amputations—stacked neat as stanzas  
in the mist and rain. Terminal spark of sap and sawdust.

Cedar waxwings stop in the top branches. Sit for a slow  
sun-polish to every feather. Lispering music, sipping  
sunlight: hordes of small birds hurrying south.

In January, unimaginable, two bluebirds. Day and night  
he is eating his knuckles  
as if there were no tomorrow. Months mooning by. Years.

Sweat-speckled, honeyed at every pore—joined like any other  
couple at the hip. The etymology of grief  
seeps into stones that hold the house together.

Crown of gold, rainbow skirt: *She doesn't say anything,*  
says the child, drawing Aphrodite. Paperwhite narcissi  
rising from a rack of white stones. Hawkligh. Wind

cuffing water. Lightness of hands, blue veins pencilled in.  
Silver bangle, oxblood boots, bones  
of the face: she's all there. *Forget your life. Get up.*

But not yet dawn in her golden, open sandals.

Eamon Grennan

a giant "we" whose good is to be pursued in the same cost-benefit terms that a prudent individual uses to calculate his own. For utilitarians, therefore, the cardinal virtue is sympathy: to be just, we must become impartial spectators who identify imaginatively with the interests of others and balance them in our own minds as though they were ours.

The main trouble with utilitarianism is that it does not take seriously the separateness of persons. It too readily sacrifices the individual to the whole. Many people voiced this complaint from the middle of the nineteenth century on, but no one managed to move beyond the criticism and come up with a rival and equally comprehensive conception of justice. No one, that is, until Rawls. His breakthrough was to recognize that the just society really consists in how we stand to one another, and only secondarily in how much overall good we bring about. Not sympathetic identification, but mutual respect, makes up its moral foundation.

That is the essence of Rawls's theory of "justice as fairness." In his account, justice has to do with the principles that persons can freely acknowledge before one

another as the mutually acceptable basis of their life together. Utilitarianism, he says, looks at social life with the eye of an administrator charged with allocating benefits and burdens among a given population. But the ideal of fairness takes its standpoint among the citizens themselves, since it defines the relation that they should assume with respect to one another.

Rawls's greatness lies in having thus recast the very idea of what justice is about. Utilitarians—or "consequentialists," as they more demurely call themselves today—have not exactly vanished from the scene, for the notion that our basic duty is to bring about as much good as possible has an undeniable attraction. But Rawls has made clear the fundamental issues at stake; and he has shown that there exists a systematic alternative to the utilitarian paradigm.

**A** THEORY OF JUSTICE pointed out that justice as fairness lends itself to a "Kantian interpretation," and at various stages in the argument of that book Kant is cited to buttress one point or another. *Lectures* now reveals just how deeply Rawls's political thought turns upon his study of Kant's ethics. The central questions of modern moral philosophy, he observes, have concerned not so much the content of morality as its basis. How do we determine right and wrong, and what is it in our moral beliefs that commands our assent and moves us to act?

One possibility would be to believe that morality has an external grounding. The demands of morality, one might think, can be discerned and recognized as binding only if we appeal to some outside source such as God's will, social convention, or the state. But modern ethical theory has by and large pursued a different path, holding that moral demands possess an intrinsic validity. We can make out what we ought to do, and accept its claims upon us, from within the moral point of view itself.

Both Hume and Kant, the twin eminenences of modern ethics, espoused this approach. But they disagreed profoundly about what this self-standing basis of

morality is like. In fact, their disagreement marks a fundamental divide in ethical theory, and the debate between Humeans and Kantians continues to this day. Rawls sides with Kant, and the account that he develops of the Kantian position provides the inspiration for his own ideal of justice as fairness.

According to Hume, our moral judgments express the particular sort of desire that we feel for other people's good when considering their situation sympathetically from the impartial standpoint of the "judicious spectator." In this regard, Hume looks like an early utilitarian. But the important point here is that morality is seen as rooted in our affective nature, not in our rational nature. Nothing could be more wrongheaded, Hume claimed, than to imagine that it embodies a form of knowledge, as though there existed some realm of moral facts that we might discover.

As Rawls observes, Hume thought that he had devised something of a "knock-out" argument for this conclusion. Reason alone, Hume maintained, cannot move us to act. Knowledge, if not combined with desire, has no effect on the will. Our beliefs simply show us the way the world is, and we would not care about changing its course if we did not also have various needs and wants. Our moral judgments, by contrast, generally involve the commitment to make things go as we judge that they should go, even if other interests may prevail in the end. Thus it cannot be knowledge that they express. Moral judgments, Hume concluded, give voice instead to our "passions."

**T**HE TROUBLE WITH this argument is that it allows little or no room for there being such a thing as rational deliberation. When Hume famously declared that "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions," he seemed to be reducing the role of reason to calculating the best means to the ultimate ends that we happen to desire. Yet this modest role is even further reduced by the way in which Hume understood the "general appetite to good" that impels us to look to the future no less than to the present, and that therefore tells us to match means and ends. This appetite is itself but another passion. It shapes our thinking, depending on how strong it is, but there can be no sense in supposing that it is a demand of reason—that it has, in other words, an authority distinct from its strength. "Tis as little contrary to reason," Hume thus wrote, "to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater." The upshot, as Rawls shows, is that Hume really had no conception of practical reasoning at all.

With Kant, matters were quite different. He distinguished clearly between the strength of motives and the authority of motives, pointing out that when we deliberate about what to do, their authority is our paramount concern. We may observe that there are some things we want quite a lot, but our object is to determine what we ought to do, so that even if we decide to act on our strongest desire and do so because it is so intense, we must be assuming that the strength of this desire counts as a good reason to satisfy it. Deliberation, Kant argued, takes place within a "practical point of view," in which we regard ourselves as free beings who are moved by reasons. "As we deliberate," Rawls remarks, "we must not believe that our powers of reason are determined by anything external to our reason, or allow anything to influence us except the reasons and evidence that are relevant for our consideration."

We may also look at ourselves from the same "theoretical point of view" that we adopt toward the natural world, seeing ourselves as but one more phenomenon governed by physical laws of cause and effect. Many of Kant's successors, and sometimes Kant himself, got tied up in knots trying to explain how these divergent points of view can both be valid. Do we simultaneously live in two different worlds, one where our actions are free and another where they are caused? Or do we as free agents intervene in the world of cause and effect, initiating from the outside a chain of events that then unfolds according to physical law? Or, yet again, are our actions at one and the same time both free and caused?

According to Rawls, Kant in his best moments pursued a less metaphysical and more promising tack. His solution was that theoretical and practical reason are animated by different interests, the one aiming at a systematic explanation of the world as given in experience, the other at a systematic ordering of our ends, both individual and collective. Both interests are legitimate; and their results are in harmony so long as neither trespasses on the other's terrain and one does not pretend, for example, that science has shown freedom to be an illusion. (If we are not free beings moved by reasons, how can we suppose that we hold the latest scientific theory because of the good grounds to accept it?)

Kant, as Rawls says, understood philosophy fundamentally as "defense." Its goal is not to devise a single, ultimate picture of the world in which everything, causality plus freedom, has its place. It is instead to defend reason in all its forms against the various threats of skepticism. This conception of philosophy as defense clearly

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corresponds to Rawls's own convictions. The "independence of moral theory" that he championed in his presidential address is very much in this spirit. In his course on the history of moral philosophy, Rawls generally kept his own opinions far in the background, preferring to interpret as generously as possible the philosophers he was discussing. His guiding assumption, he once remarked in retrospect, was that they "were much smarter than I was." The expression of humility is characteristic. Still, there are passages in these lectures where Rawls is unmistakably speaking in his own voice as well as in his subject's, and this is one of them. The definition of philosophy as defense forms the culmination of the book's central chapters on Kant.

ON ANOTHER SCORE, too, Kant figures as a stand-in for Rawls himself, namely regarding the doctrine that Rawls calls "moral constructivism." Though Kant differed from Hume in seeing deliberation as a rational activity, he did not believe that our judgments about what we ought morally to do aim at some kind of knowledge. There is no such thing as "moral knowledge," if that notion means the grasping of moral distinctions that are there anyway, awaiting our discovery. For Kant, we determine the rightness or the wrongness of an action by appealing to moral principles that we legislate for ourselves, or that, in Rawls's terms, we "construct."

Lying, for example, is wrong because the policy of lying whenever it is convenient to lie, were everyone to adopt it, would undermine the general practice of truth-telling of which lying itself seeks to take advantage. Such a policy could not be coherently "universalized"; we could not be willing that everyone act upon it at the same time as we chose to pursue it ourselves. This fact, Kant averred, tells us that the principle of telling the truth, even when it runs contrary to our interest, is a principle we must therefore impose on ourselves.

Such is, in outline, Kant's idea of the procedure—Rawls names it the "CI-procedure"—by which we construct the "categorical imperatives," or CIs, the absolute do's and don'ts of morality that we use to judge particular actions and institutions. Kant was not claiming anything so silly as that liars contradict themselves. As mere liars, they do not. But they run into contradiction if they also think of themselves as legislators, governing themselves by rules of action that they can imagine imposing on others as well. Liars have to suppose, if they give any thought to the matter at all, that they are somehow special.

What must we be like, then, if we regard ourselves as moral legislators? What is the conception of the person that underlies Kant's ethics? At this point in his exposition, Rawls switches over to his own idiom. People who understand themselves as constructing in this way the principles of morality have a commitment to being *reasonable*. Their goal is to regulate their dealings with one another according to terms that they all have reason to endorse. For the principles that they adopt are ones that rule out making an exception for oneself.

In Rawls's eyes, conceiving of morality as the body of principles that reasonable people construct for themselves was one of Kant's great innovations. It forms an essential part, he claims, of the ideal that Kant called autonomy. As that very term suggests, "autonomous" agents are a law unto themselves. They do not simply subordinate their desires to a sense of duty; they also refuse to regard their sense of duty as itself beholden to some "prior and independent moral order." Kant was not perfectly explicit about this last point, but it follows, in Rawls's view, from the logic of his position. "Kant's idea of autonomy," he argues, "requires that there exists no moral order prior to and independent of those conceptions that determine the form of the procedure that specifies the content of the duties of justice and of virtue."

In effect, Kant broke ranks with other rationalists such as Leibniz or Samuel Clarke (the object of Hume's attack too, though on different grounds), who saw in moral judgments the attempt to get it right about a supposedly pre-existing realm of moral principles and reasons. Practical reason does not operate like a species of theoretical reason, as though we must first know what we ought to do and then put it into practice. It expresses our nature not as knowers, but as doers; and in the form that it takes in moral reasoning, it engages us as doers who together are setting up the basis for a common life. "Pure practical reason," writes Rawls with this activity in mind, "must construct out of itself its own object."

Rawls's own allegiance to this conception could not be more evident. It recommends itself first of all for its metaphysical economy: we do not have to assume that there exists somewhere—where, exactly?—an independent domain of moral reality. It also gives us a richer and more plausible account of moral agency. Leibniz and Clarke ("rational intuitionists," Rawls calls them) had difficulty explaining why we care as we do about moral distinctions, if they are merely further facts that we come to know. If moral principles are instead understood as deriving

from our effort to create a shared code of conduct, then there is no mystery about why they matter to us or why the point of morality is not to provide a topic for individual speculation, but rather to achieve a social purpose.

IN RECENT YEARS, Rawls's moral constructivism has become not only the leading current in the interpretation of Kant, but also a springboard for much of contemporary moral philosophy. But the theory has some serious drawbacks. Chief among them is that constructivism cannot supply a complete theory of the moral world. The image that it proposes of us as the architects of morality is itself defined by moral assumptions. We are depicted as constructing principles of morality only to the extent that we are assumed to have a commitment to being reasonable. Yet reasonableness is nothing less than a moral principle in its own right. To seek a basis for living together that all can have reason to accept is to regard one another as free and equal persons whose relations are to be grounded upon mutual respect. The construction of morality that is envisaged by Rawls builds on a moral foundation that must already be in place, and thus is not itself constructed.

Rawls is aware that the idea of the reasonable is moral in character. His insistence upon the difference between the reasonable and "the rational" makes that clear. The problem is that his constructivist view falls short of explaining the deepest layers of our moral self-understanding. And so the so-called intuitionists seem to have been on to something essential after all. Unless we take our bearings from a moral order that at least in its basics exists independent of our will, we cannot so much as see the point of legislating for ourselves any principles of duty. Autonomy cannot be our supreme ideal.

As a matter of fact, the very same situation turns up in the Original Position, the device that Rawls, drawing his inspiration from Kant's constructivism, uses to expound his own theory of justice. Recall that we are to imagine ourselves as represented by parties who choose principles of justice subject to certain constraints (the "veil of ignorance"). These constraints, which are not of the parties' own making, express the moral axioms that we should believe are binding upon any such choice and thus upon the principles of justice that we ourselves, in the light of this model, adopt as our own. What is the norm that lies at the center of this moral framework? Once again, it is the obligation to be reasonable. Any conception of justice we might think of imposing on ourselves has to be grounded in the commit-

ment to seek fair terms of cooperation that everyone can have reason to endorse.

Thus the ideal of respect for persons contained in the notion of reasonableness forms the innermost core of Rawls's philosophy. He has not succeeded in clarifying its basis or its source of authority—but he has shown more powerfully than ever before the crucial place that it should occupy in our moral thinking. In the final chapter of these *Lectures*, Rawls cites Hegel's opinion that "there are always only two possible viewpoints in the ethical realm: either one starts from substantiality [that is, from the community as a

whole], or one proceeds atomistically and moves upward from the basis of individuality." Not true, Rawls objects. The moral point of view does not consist in seeing ourselves as "accidents" (as Hegel said) of a community with a life of its own. Nor does it amount to some sort of bargain we strike in order to pursue more securely our individual projects. There is, he insists, a third alternative. The moral life revolves around the relation itself in which we stand to one another. At its center is the recognition that our very plurality makes us beings each deserving of respect. ■

indeed that its "resurrection and preservation" positions it "safely among the masterpieces of American fiction."

Readers with enough curiosity and patience can now test this claim, not an easy one to sustain even granting that something of the size, the bravado, and the luxuriance of *O Lost* seeped away in the process of its rendering. *Look Homeward, Angel* is less panoramic in its sweep than *O Lost*, more focused on the *Bildungsroman* than on the social history of a North Carolina hill town. It is not a violation, though, of the Wolfean *Geist*. Like any mainline publisher in 1928, Perkins respected the line between the permissible and the impermissible. Obscenities, graphic sex, and literal descriptions of degradation obviously had to go, but he and Wheeler did their best to preserve the substance and the texture of Wolfe's book. And Wolfe, eager to get it in print and a little awed by his Yankee editor, assured him that "dirty words" in *O Lost* could be cut "without conscience or compunction."

The blue-penciling of Wolfe's bad boy language and a few of his grittier lowlife scenes about rough people and rough places hardly constituted a wholesale expurgation, but it does mark the line between the acceptable and the unacceptable in the 1920s:

Fluorescent with smooth ripe-meated curves the drawling virgins of the South filled summer porches. They were sudden and long in their heat, skilled in the uses of the easy kiss, the silken leg; erotically rhythmic to all the crawling titillation of the twiddled tit, the wet plunges of the forefinger. They had long juicy tongues most fit for filling up a kissing mouth, and the perfume of their bodies was like magnolia and guava.

Or:

She came near him. He felt her hot breath on his face, the smothering flood of her breasts. He was whirled like a chip in the wild current of her passion. Her powerful yellow hands gripped his slender arms round like bracelets. She shook him to and fro slowly, and fastening him tightly against her pelt, caught his thin body in the gripe of her great thighs.

Wolfe did not protest the good intentions of his editors, though he intimated that they would have liked to rein him in and to change him from what he was later to call a "putter-inner" into a "taker-outer." And Bruccoli thinks so, too. Parker and Wheeler, he writes in his introduction to *O Lost*, "altered the scope and intention" of Wolfe's novel in the process of eliminat-

# The Gripe of Genius

By DANIEL AARON

*O Lost: A Story of the Buried Life*

by Thomas Wolfe

Text established by

Arlyn Bruccoli and Matthew J. Bruccoli

(University of South Carolina Press, 694 pp., \$29.95)

*To Loot My Life Clean:*

The Thomas Wolfe–Maxwell Perkins

Correspondence

edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Park Bucker

(University of South Carolina Press, 340 pp., \$39.95)

**I**N MARCH 1928, Thomas Wolfe sent the manuscript of *O Lost* to Charles Scribner's Sons with an explanatory note. It was a long "book" (not a "novel," he informed the publisher's reader), but not too long given its scope of fifty years, twenty of them exhaustively examined, in the life of a large family. It was also "autobiographical" in the sense that it pictured a "buried life" and a "child's soul." Darkness, evil, and the forbidden permeated the story, but Wolfe had told it without lewdness or affectation, and in the "romantic" belief that "pain has an inevitable fruition in beauty." Sometimes it seemed to him that his book was "a strange and deep picture of American life," but he couldn't be sure what parts were good or bad. What he needed now was "a little honest help."

Wolfe's letter initiated a collaboration

between an editor and a writer that in time became a footnote in American literary history. Scribner's Maxwell Perkins accepted *O Lost* after three publishers had rejected it, and in the fall of 1929 Wolfe's first novel, trimmed down and manicured, came out under a new title, *Look Homeward, Angel*. Now, seven decades later, the restoration of *O Lost* in Arlyn and Matthew Bruccoli's unabridged edition reveals what Perkins and his aide, the poet John Hall Wheelock, found after they had unpackaged Wolfe's mighty manuscript.

Bruccoli is at pains to refute the canard that Wolfe was a self-intoxicated hunk who could not have written his books without the help of Scribner's "assembly line," and without Maxwell Perkins in particular. He acknowledges the good intentions of Perkins and Wheelock while regretting their Procrustean prunings, and he declares that *O Lost* is a fresher and stronger work than its groomed version,

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ing or drastically condensing scenes and characters and authorial interventions.

All the same, it could be plausibly entertained that their cuts reduced the book's girth and corrected its sprawl without stifling its vitality. The manuscript survived their pruning (at some cost, to be sure, to the idea of his book as Wolfe first conceived it), and Wolfe never complained or even hinted that they had vandalized a great family saga. He was more than pleased with its transformation. To many people, he wrote Perkins, it would be a "modest success." To him, it was "touched with wonder," a "miracle."

The Wolfe-Perkins correspondence, *To Loot My Life Clean* (the title is lifted from Wolfe's work-in-progress report on *Of Time and the River*) is the most detailed account of their hectic relationship as well as of Wolfe's symbiotic links to the House of Scribner. Perkins, and for a time Wheelock, soon became confidants to whom Wolfe freely conveyed his godlike raptures and black despairs. The letters, only a third of them previously published, recapitulate the themes of his fiction: his ambition to engorge the world, to express his unbounded love for America (the "enormous and lonely land" he yearns for in "exile"), and to incorporate into his being "the elements of the universal experience." They show him raging against his malicious assailants, "the Wastelanders, the lost generations, the bitter-enders, the futility people, and all the other cheap literary fakes sicklied o'er with the pale cast of Stein-shit." The most frenetic of the letters are at once cries for help and insinuations that Perkins's writer-friends, even the ostensibly friendly ones, were out to get him, and that Perkins was doing nothing to shield him from their poisoned arrows.

Wolfe stayed unshakably loyal to Perkins, his friend and mentor, yet he still felt impelled to quit Scribner for reasons that neither dared face up to. Perhaps Wolfe came close to the mark when he suggested that for him "the editor and friend" had grown too close, and that he had mixed the two relations. It pained him when his surrogate father changed into a cautious publisher who pointedly discouraged him from dragging his libel suits, and Scrib-

ner's involvement in them, into his fiction. To Perkins, their unresolved differences on this issue sprang from Wolfe's "really fine and subconscious desire" to end his state of dependence on the editor who, according to Wolfe's implacable critics, had converted his jumbled piles of manuscripts into books. Wolfe's anxieties may also have been aggravated by a nagging suspicion that Perkins was amused by his outcries and indifferent to his pain. Assurances from Wheelock that he was "one of the few men of genius writing English today" no longer sustained his ego. He

not to fence him in, Fitzgerald advised), and condoled with him over Wolfe's premature death.

But neither considered Wolfe a major artist or believed in his staying power. Hemingway likened him to "a great child," and to the sad heavyweight Primo Carnera. In short, he was a "genius"—a pejorative term in Hemingway's lexicon. Fitzgerald called him a writer of "exquisite talent" spoiled by a chronic verbal redundancy, a lack of humility, and an incapacity to feel "other people's passions." Even the devoted Wheelock, always tactful and solicitous, urged Wolfe to restrain his fondness for literary allusions lest the reader get "the impression that the author is conscious of his skill and virtuosity."

There is something poignant in the spectacle of the ardent youth (for so he thought of himself) in a sky-assaulting mood, prepared to take on the epigones of T.S. Eliot and convinced (according to Perkins) that "the talent in him made him vastly more important" than his vaunted literary contemporaries. "Tom had almost no sense of humor when he was concerned about his work," Perkins noted in a document uncovered by Bruccoli, "and this was most of the time." Yet his scorn for the likes of Bernard DeVoto and Clifton Fadiman did not dull the sting of their mockery.

A huge and spasmodic letter to Perkins, dated March 1935, reviews Wolfe's literary doubts and anguish after "the enemy" had waylaid him on the road to fame, poisoned his reputation, and ruined his health.

Why, he asked rhetorically,

do Americans kill their best people, hail them as "lords of the earth" one year and defame them the next? The "enemy" constituted the whole New York "crowd," radicals and conservatives alike. It singled out "a young man proud of spirit and athirst for glory, and full of the urge to create and make his life prevail," and lynched him. Henceforth he vowed to dedicate himself to truth and to resist the "corrupt respectabilities," at the price of exile if need be. Perkins should not try to divert him from his destiny: "Restrain my adjectives, by all means, discipline my adverbs, moderate the technical extravagances of my incondite exuberance, but



Thomas Wolfe by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

felt muzzled and alone. None of his tenuous ties with the two other writers in Perkins's stable had hardened into genuine friendships.

Perkins expected his two stars, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, to welcome his new protégé. And so they did—up to a point: the young Lochinvar from North Carolina was a natural phenomenon and a nice guy to boot. But in time they demoted him to Tom the pesky junior who demanded too much attention from the Scribners staff and was super-sensitive to criticism. They warned Perkins that Wolfe would prove to be a handful, counseled him on how to sooth Wolfe's easily ruffled feelings (best

don't derail the train."

Thomas Wolfe's admirers thronged American campuses sixty years ago. They took him pretty much on his own terms, as an original who in his best moments shamed his puny critics and whose excesses could no more be condemned than the shocks of earthquakes. College students, usually with disastrous results, imitated his swelling cadences. *O Lost*

and *To Loot My Life* show him at his best and at his worst. They also justify the fear of one of his well-wishers, John Dos Passos, "that this very great talent would never come to maturity." Right or wrong, this prediction seems to anticipate the critical consensus today. The finest specimens of Wolfe's writing are buried in his fiction like spermaceti in the massive head of a sperm whale. ■

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# Midnight Ramblers

By ALAN TAYLOR

## Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in the Revolutionary Era by Mechal Sobel

(Princeton University Press, 355 pp., \$35)

**D**URING THE LATE-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries—an age of revolutions—Americans were, literally, dreamers. They earnestly experienced, described, and discussed their dreams and visions. Instead of reflexively dismissing a dream as "only a dream," most Americans suspected supernatural meaning, either divine providence or satanic manipulation. Such dreams demanded explanation and action, for to ignore them was to risk an early death, court eternal damnation, or lose some golden opportunity. Guided by angels, Joseph Smith, Jr., sought—and claimed to find—the golden plates of a newer testament that became the Book of Mormon. After envisioning a spectral battle in the sky, Nat Turner organized a bloody slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831 that made the Civil War almost inevitable. Inspired by dreams and assisted by magic spells, hundreds of common farmers dug for buried treasure throughout the hinterland. In dreams young people yearned to know whom they should or would marry. Most commonly of all, souls traveled in dreams to see heaven and hell, and to seek the secrets of salvation from angels.

The most self-conscious dreamers wrote autobiographies and had the means, or obtained the sponsors, to secure publi-

cation. Uncommon before 1740, such "self-narratives" proliferated after the American Revolution, as printing presses multiplied and common people felt more important and more curious about one another. Some two hundred published narratives, most featuring recounted dreams, provide the basis for Mechal Sobel's daring new book. An Israeli scholar educated in the United States, Sobel combines the insights of both an insider and an outsider to American history. In one nation or the other (or perhaps in both), she has developed a special sensitivity to the interdependence of peoples who profess their separation and enmity. In a previous book, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, which appeared in 1987, Sobel revealed the extensive cultural influence exercised by enslaved blacks on a world otherwise dominated by their white masters. Building upon its predecessor, *Teach Me Dreams* finds African spiritual practices oozing into Southern evangelical Christianity, including shouting and dancing to express a more joyful spirituality. Above all, Sobel finds that blacks and whites dreamed obsessively about one another.

The book itself has a dreamlike quality in its repetitive organization and its broad swings in tone and approach. The prose oscillates between passages of feverish opacity, bursts of creative understanding, and biographies of colorful characters. Sobel rescues from obscurity an array of fascinating personalities, including Deborah Sampson, who dressed as a man to serve in the Revolutionary army; Sarah

Osborn, who developed a popular ministry disguised as a school; Jonathan Brunt, "a fear-ridden madman" who "expressed the most open anger at women of all the men in this study"; and William Grimes, a bitter former slave who contemplated bestowing his whip-scarred skin to the United States government for use to "bind the Constitution of glorious, happy, and free America. Let the skin of an American slave bind the charter of American liberty!" In sum, Sobel's book cannot be read quickly and easily, but patience will provide rewarding surprises.

To interpret these early American dreams Sobel moves beyond Freud, applying instead the more recent and more empirical theories of Charlotte Beradt, Heinz Kohut, Ernst Lawrence Rossi, and Christopher Bollas. Studying dreams recorded in Germany during the 1930s, Beradt concludes that people conformed to Nazi demands in their dreams before embracing them in action. From Kohut, Sobel learns that dreams develop and maintain a sense of identity. Rossi provides a useful measure for a dreamer's level of self-reflection, from the lowest (dreams without people) up to those with "multiple levels of awareness"—dreams that promote the greatest "psychological growth." And Bollas imparts to Sobel the notion that "the self" does not simply emerge in complete antithesis with an "other"—but also covertly steals ideas and emotions, a process they call "introjection." In repelling an other in dreams and their narratives, dreamers mask their own introjections of envied attitudes and behaviors. Sobel and the theorists treat dreams and their narration, in short, "as technologies of the self": as tools for people subconsciously to imagine their tensions, and then consciously to work through them to a greater self-awareness (albeit while saddling themselves with hidden costs).

**O**NCE UPON A time, American cultural historians wrote about the emergence of "individualism." Now they analyze the development of "the self" in relation to "an other." More than a matter of words, the shift registers a darker view of our national past. In former histories, American individualism seemed a bracing response to the material abundance and the dangerous challenge of an open frontier, which demanded initiative as it offered liberation from older creeds and constraints. Associated with wide-open spaces and opportunities, individualism seemed upbeat, expansive, and available to all (except, of course, Indians and enslaved blacks).

In stark contrast, "the self" is a more sobering concept that demands an inner, psychological explanation. In Sobel's

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account, the self depends upon an exaggerated reaction against an antithesis, an imagined enemy known to scholars as “the other.” No product of shared abundance and opportunity, “the self” reveals instead the powerful divisions of race, class, and gender in our history. The white middle-class man necessarily constructs a different sense of self by polarizing against all whom he considers his opposites: blacks, the poor, women. By defining them as shiftless, immoral, and weak, he seeks to become industrious, virtuous, and strong. Of course, he also must serve as the consummate other for an impoverished black woman. By regarding him as domineering and obtuse, she can cherish community and spontaneity. In the process of creating a self, everyone learns “to reject aspects of their potential” by projecting them in an imagined “anti-Me.”

TODAY MOST PEOPLE take for granted the inner-consciousness called “the self” in the supposed control of emotions and actions. We earnestly believe that we can improve ourselves by inner action, given the proper books, tapes, reflection, therapy, and support. And, in our luxuriating self-consciousness, we assume that past peoples felt and thought as we do. Lately, though, cultural historians have come to depict our contemporary sense of self as a modern construction. Before the eighteenth century, according to the new account, most Americans and Britons had a weak and porous sense of self, one subject to the demands of their communities and their social superiors—but especially to the tricks of the devil and the ultimate providence of God. The few common people who wrote surviving narratives seemed to experience life passively as one surprising crisis after another, all revealing their helplessness before the ultimate and inscrutable power of fate and the divine. “They did not see themselves,” Sobel notes, “as having fashioned their lives or as being responsible for their selves.” Indeed, self was their enemy, their “other,” best suppressed as a snare fatal to Christian salvation.

This began to change after 1740, as most people gradually reimagined themselves as assertive actors at center stage in lives with individual pattern and profound significance. To explain this shift in self-conception, Sobel cites the increasing proselytization by evangelical churches; the active citizenship promoted by the republican Revolution; the individuating demands of a more commercialized economy; and the increasing interaction between the races as the black population grew. But she ultimately locates the process of change in particular lives. Dreams

were central to the “refashioning” of American selves—but, according to Sobel, they only became effective for “self-fashioning” when the dreamer identified an “alien other,” located the dream in his or her life story, and found validation by an “outside authority.”

Troubled by social and political changes in their world, often in ways obscured to their conscious minds, people struggled with dark feelings, which found a focus in dreams about an enemy, “an alien other.” In dreams, whites felt attacked by imaginary blacks or by a guilt for what they had done to blacks. Similarly, blacks vented their rage at night in dreams of thieving, cheating, abusive whites. Gender also polarized dreams as men and women imagined one another as alien others, which helped propel a daytime process of increasing distinction in their behaviors and attitudes.

AMERICANS EVIDENTLY DID not sleep lightly, for Sobel reports an array of grim and violent dreams full of fear and loathing. The Revolutionary cross-dresser Deborah Sampson dreamed that she was attacked and “drenched in blood” by an immense serpent. She whacked the snake to bits, only to see the pieces reaggregate as a raging ox. Killing a second time, Sampson bludgeoned the ox into “gelly.” Sobel plausibly reads this dream as evidence that Sampson dreaded sexual assault and, thereafter, meant to defend herself by dressing as a man.

In 1770, the Quaker preacher John Woolman dreamed that “a man had been hunting and brought a living creature to Mount Holly of a mixed breed, part fox and part cat.” To provide “flesh to feed this creature” the whites seized an elderly black man: “raising a long ladder against the house, they hanged the old man” and butchered the remains. Although appalled, the dreaming Woolman felt paralyzed and unable to articulate his horror. “And being in great distress I continued wailing till I began to wake, and opening my eyes I perceived it was morning.” Later that morning Woolman shared his horrific dream with a close friend who confessed that he had similarly dreamed that same night of a butchered black man hung up in a smokehouse. Sobel interprets their dreams as expressions of guilt at how little they had done to challenge slavery.

Regarding such dreams as especially profound, and even as divine, people recalled them and scrutinized them for some guidance, some change that they needed to make in their lives. They felt compelled to narrate their especially vivid and troubling dreams, usually orally, sometimes in print. Over time, these nar-

ratives assumed a more dramatic form, with a climax and a resolution effected by self-action. Sobel explains that

threats to the self were coped with in dreams and then in the narrated lives. Change in the self was often worked out on the dream-screen, and this change was then played out in the narrative report of the waking life. In crucial dreams . . . an alien other was targeted and a dream-screen commitment was made. Many people awoke determined to act on this recognition and commitment.

Pressured to recreate themselves as autonomous individuals, men felt a stress that induced dreams of women as weakening temptresses. By overcoming such women in their dreams and narrating the victories to their peers, men moved closer to the demanding ideal—but at the painful cost of their relational and empathetic potential.

To honor their dreamed commitments to a new self, people needed a legitimating forum—a social group to evaluate and to vindicate both the dream and the changes. Religious groups, especially upstart Protestant churches, provided the most effective “outside authority.” By demanding and examining conversion stories, which often included the spiritual interpretation of dreams, the churches “helped the individual reframe the past and begin a new path in life.” In effect, they confirmed that the dream was real and worthy of serving as a spur to personal action.

But such groups also narrowed the ambivalent meanings of dreams, further demonizing the alien other. Far from celebrating the new triumph of the modern self, Sobel sees a tragic legacy of the perversion of dreams: “as a result of the growing need to develop an individuated self, irrational hatreds came to further dominate our lives.” In her closing note, Sobel exhorts her readers to break from “our binary systems of white/black and male/female, in order to reframe reality. Perhaps the way lies through a new appreciation of individual dreams and collective myths.”

ALMOST ALL OF Sobel’s evidence derives from published narratives, and only rarely from manuscript diaries, journals, and reminiscences kept in archives. This raises the probability that her sources were heavily filtered by the demands of readers, publishers, editors, and financial sponsors, who expected a certain conformity to the specifications of a genre: the pious biography of a repenting sinner. Rather than address the constraints of literary form and the publishing market, Sobel announces that “in

this study I have taken the narrators at their word."

She also does not clarify her criteria for selecting her two hundred published accounts—a subset of the many hundreds written in America between 1740 and 1840. Featuring people preoccupied with racial and sexual differences, the two hundred texts that she adduces seem especially chosen to confirm her argument rather than more randomly to test it. In the process, Sobel gives very short shrift—exactly one paragraph—to the powerful dream culture of Indians and its interplay on the frontier with the dreams and visions of evangelical settlers. Rather than explore the major role of Indians and whites as self and other in their different dreams, she "focuses on black-white interaction inasmuch as this relationship was *the* defining self-other relationship for most of the narrators in this study and has remained central in American culture since that time"—which is to say that black-white relations were central to those narratives that she chose to investigate.

**S**OBEL INSISTS THAT the range of the published authors—in race, class, and gender—offers a representative cross-section of American society. If so, readers will conclude that, during the revolutionary generation, most people became preachers, for the narratives largely derive from religious seekers justifying their sense of calling to a ministry. As Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, and Disciples of Christ, most authors belonged to upstart religious groups that especially cherished dreams as a source of divine authority superior to the official authority of learned and powerful men in this world. And the narrators chosen by Sobel tend to be people with especially unconventional claims to the ministry—blacks, women, and the poor—who could find authorization only in a divine dream or vision. Although important and rapidly growing minorities, these religious seekers did not necessarily speak for those Americans who professed some faith more skeptical of dreams: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Anglicans, and rationalists.

By necessity, Sobel's interpretations of the dreams are highly subjective and speculative. Where Freud detected sex within every dream, Sobel finds race ubiquitously coded. Sarah Beckhouse Hamilton, a young woman in South Carolina, dreamed of heaven, seeing "a great company of shining people in white robes, with white palms in their hands. They all sung with melodious harmony, such singing as I had never heard before." This is Sobel's interpretation of this dream:

All these references suggest that Hamilton saw the heavenly host as African American: "Singing such as . . . never heard before" was a response often made to Africans' singing, and the "white palms in their hands," can be understood as a pun which conflated the palms of Palm Sunday with the white palms of Africans' hands. The "shining people" may well have been another reference to Africans, who used oil to anoint their skin.

Maybe Sobel is right, given the subsequent twist in Hamilton's life: suddenly rejecting a proposed marriage to a wealthy planter, she instead became "a lay leader in a black and white congregation." But maybe Sobel is wrong, for shining (white) people, glorious singing, and white palm fronds were commonplaces of the spiritual dreams narrated by dozens of Northerners who never made Hamilton's choice and had little to do with blacks.

**I**LLUSTRATING RATHER THAN demonstrating her points, Sobel selects writers preoccupied with black-white relations and prone to dream. When push comes to shove, however, she runs with any text that illuminates racial thinking and conflict—even if it is devoid of dreams for analysis. Thus Sobel understandably (and smartly) recapitulates the luridly compelling narrative of William Otter, who gloried in his powerful physique, thorough racism, and talent for mockery. A white artisan in urban America during the early nineteenth century, Otter felt a violent rage at women, at the Irish, and—especially—at blacks. A professional slave-catcher, he became covertly but thoroughly familiar with the haunts of fugitives: black taverns, dancehalls, boarding houses, and churches. When not tracking blacks for business, he tormented them for pleasure. Once he thrust a goat, blindfolded and daubed in excrement, into a crowded black church. As the alarmed worshipers bolted through the windows, Otter and his gang of white thugs pummeled them with sticks and whips.

Narrated with unrepentant glee, Otter's tales sought the applause of whites who needed rage to mask their apparent envy of black cultural spontaneity. Sobel concludes that "he wrote his narrative as though it were the script for a blackface minstrel show in which he played the role of master trickster." The analysis of Otter is critical for Sobel's argument, for he appears as the lone example of a major category in her schema: "Conflicted Self-fashioning: In which Whites were more actively demeaning Blacks in order to achieve a sense of Unity and Superiority and were not overtly conscious of the Fact that they were dependent on them for

crucial emotions and values, circa 1810-1840." Unfortunately for Sobel's purpose, however, Otter recorded no dreams to provide the master key to his psychological development.

With more ingenuity than consistency, Sobel finds a dream for him in an anonymous account printed in 1835 by *The Southern Literary Messenger*. Seized by two "large, gaunt blackamoors," the dreamer painfully lost his nose to their spinning grindstone. Adding insult to injury, the blacks mocked the dreamer by singing a minstrel ballad. Awaking in a sweat, the narrator focused his outrage on the ballad, which he insisted had been "stolen . . . from the white black-face minstrelsy stage." Associating this dream with Otter, Sobel insists that "the writer of this dream report, while far more self-conscious and far more intellectual than Otter, revealed himself as his compatriot. It was 'the cruel mockery' that the author felt he had suffered at the hands of blacks that most hurt him. Their hearty African laughter dishonored him and spurred him to break his bonds."

In an aside and a note, however, Sobel reveals that some scholars attribute the published dream to Edgar Allan Poe. Given Sobel's causal emphasis on Otter's class position as a laboring man in competition with blacks, presenting the literary construct of an educated gentleman as if it were Otter's dream seems like a sleight of hand. Fortunately, Sobel is candid here (and throughout her book) about her crafting and combining of difficult and scattered evidence, inviting readers to judge her risky methods and her bold conclusions. Although often debatable, her discussion is consistently intriguing.

**B**ECAUSE HER SELECTION of narratives seems limited and arbitrary, and because her interpretations of dreams can only be speculative, Sobel cannot prove her largest claim: that these particular dreams served as the crucial pivot for a society-wide transformation of revolutionary and enduring dimensions. But if her book falls far short of a social-science proof, it is certainly a powerful evocation of a troubled America for common people, a divided land ordinarily obscured by mythic celebrations of the Revolution as a boon for everyone. Sobel has boldly probed into a strange and demanding and promising subject. For this reason, her book is a major accomplishment. By exploring the conspicuous nexus of race, gender, rage, dreaming, and self-fashioning in one particular set of narratives, Sobel has certainly identified a critical set of raw nerves in our history, and a bold new approach to the understanding of our past. ■

# PANMUNJOM DIARIST

## Borderline

**L**IVING NOW IN AN ERA WHEN frontiers are celebrated for their porousness—permeated by pop culture and the media, by tidal flows of capital and resourceful migrants—I like to collect artifacts of those borders that really counted. I confess to filching a small shard among the remnants of Hadrian's Wall this past summer in Northumberland. Two pieces of Berlin Wall kitsch perch on my office bookshelves: a small piece of stone and barbed wire artfully mounted on a stained-wood base, which was peddled on-site, and a larger chunk of masonry promptly boxed for the 1989 U.S. Christmas sales. Recently, I added to this collection a length of rusted barbed wire from the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, elaborately mounted on a map decorated with the flags of U.N.-allied nations, all set into a glass box frame.

I PURCHASED THE MEMENTO (SET number 3,030 of a "limited edition" of 150,000) during a Korean conference on post-cold-war international relations and the possible unification of the peninsula—my qualification being some knowledge of the German experience. Our small group of scholars was allowed to visit the armistice line established to end the Korean War more than 47 years ago—a bleak border, marked by stakes. The four-kilometer-wide demilitarized zone, or DMZ, that straddles the border was laid out across the waist of Korea to separate the contending forces after three years of a war that devastated the peninsula, costing the lives of two million Koreans, several hundred thousand Chinese, and 40,000 Americans. For the years since, it has served as a forlorn but sobering reminder that America's military presence has helped prevent warfare as well as sustain it. It also demonstrates that where military presence still matters, frontiers do as well.

ALONG THE BORDER ABOUT 30 MILES north of Seoul, between the barbed wire and guard towers, lies Panmunjom, a village of heavily subsidized farmers who cultivate rice or rent their paddies to those willing to stay overnight in the isolation of the DMZ. The huts of the village are

dwarfed by each side's official visitors' center and headquarters buildings: Unlike Checkpoint Charlie, Panmunjom is not a border-crossing point but a kind of living memorial to the war, a site where visitors can watch South Korean and North Korean soldiers stare each other down across the border. From a bit farther behind the line, the North Koreans broadcast slogans and opera, while on the southern edge there is a small U.S. Army base, where visitors are briefed by courteous American soldiers and served a meal of T-bone and canned niblets that, like the DMZ itself, seems out of the 1950s.

BEFORE MY GROUP TRAVELED TO Panmunjom, we were granted an audience with South Korean President Kim Dae Jung—a committed Christian, former political prisoner imprisoned by the military regime that governed into the 1980s, and recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to improve relations with the North. The president spoke positively of his negotiations with Kim Jong Il—the son and political heir of North Korea's founder, Kim Il Sung—who has emerged from fecklessness to a surprising determination to transform his country's brute military assets into developmental aid. Kim Dae Jung envisages the process of Korean reconciliation as parallel not to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's sweeping up of the German Democratic Republic (the economic gradient in Korea is far huger than that between the two Germanys) but to his predecessor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, which accepted the continuing existence of the GDR but sought to soften its authoritarian politics. Many in South Korea oppose Kim Dae Jung's initiatives, but, just as *Ostpolitik* did in Germany, *Nordpolitik* will probably persist across party lines.

THERE ARE ENORMOUS CHALLENGES to Kim's vision. Unlike Eastern Europe, North Korea has not been permeated by civic movements; no intelligentsia has surfaced, no Charter 77, no Solidarity, no Hungarian-style crypto-capitalism, not even the relatively timid and scattered peace prayers in East German churches that preceded the massive demonstrations in Leipzig in 1989. Still, there is some cause for hope. After all, in the late '80s, few Western observers believed that the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe would change so rapidly. Despite the iron grip of a Stalinist regime, North Korea's technical intelligentsia, and even ordinary folk who have learned to cope with dismal scarcity, may possess the capacity for future democratization and adaptation to markets. And South Koreans, having turned around a major economic crisis of their own a few

years ago, may possess the resourcefulness to cope with even rapid unification—though the German experience cautions them against extending rash promises. South Korea's economic achievements would have been rightly seen as fantastic 50 years ago; such a determined and creative society may well be able to do wonders in elevating the North as well.

THE DMZ WILL PROBABLY NOT LAST much longer in its present form: This is not an age of frontiers. This particular frontier was produced by the great powers in whose respective orbits North Korea and South Korea fell, but, as in earlier imperial structures, the patrons became hostage to their clients. Frontiers may remain plausible and even rational where, as in the DMZ, soldiers still scowl at each other from behind loaded rifles. And they will remain desirable where ethnic differences are nurtured by demagogues. They can provide the territorial coherence peoples or states need to wager on peace. But they belong to times and places where territorial conflict has not yet been overcome. Where "soft power" has replaced hard power or economics has displaced politics, they become the stuff of kitsch artifacts like my mounted length of DMZ wire. Under these conditions, it no longer makes much sense to separate imperial-size confederations, or even many national states.

KEEPING PEOPLE IN IS A PRACTICE, often of relatively poor states, that we rightly condemn as flaunting basic freedom. Keeping people out is a privilege, usually of rich states, called sovereignty. How long will we be able to sustain such an asymmetrical political usage, in which to leave one's country is insisted on as a human right (although often violated) but to settle in another is not? (At least a right for individuals: Collective group claims make a far more complex problem.) In fact, theory and practice increasingly diverge. Assuming continued prosperity, the next decades should bring further progress toward permeable confederations, such as the European Union or NAFTA, that will soften borders within and without. Otherwise we will continue to stare across the frontiers that VIPs get to visit ritually to show how free they are on one side—even as they send investments or exchange family behind the barbed wire. Far better that all that rusty fencing be boxed into packaged history.

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